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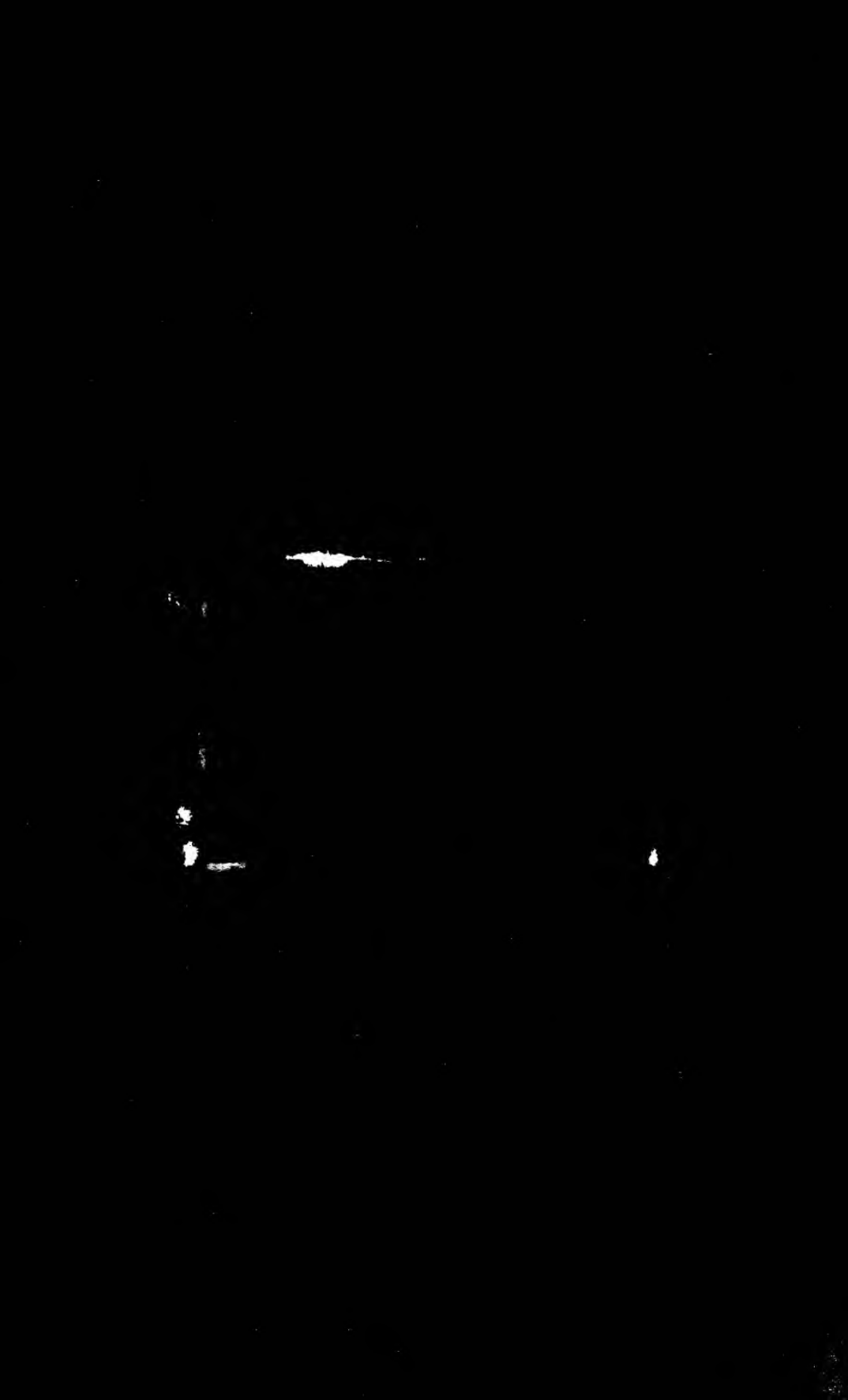
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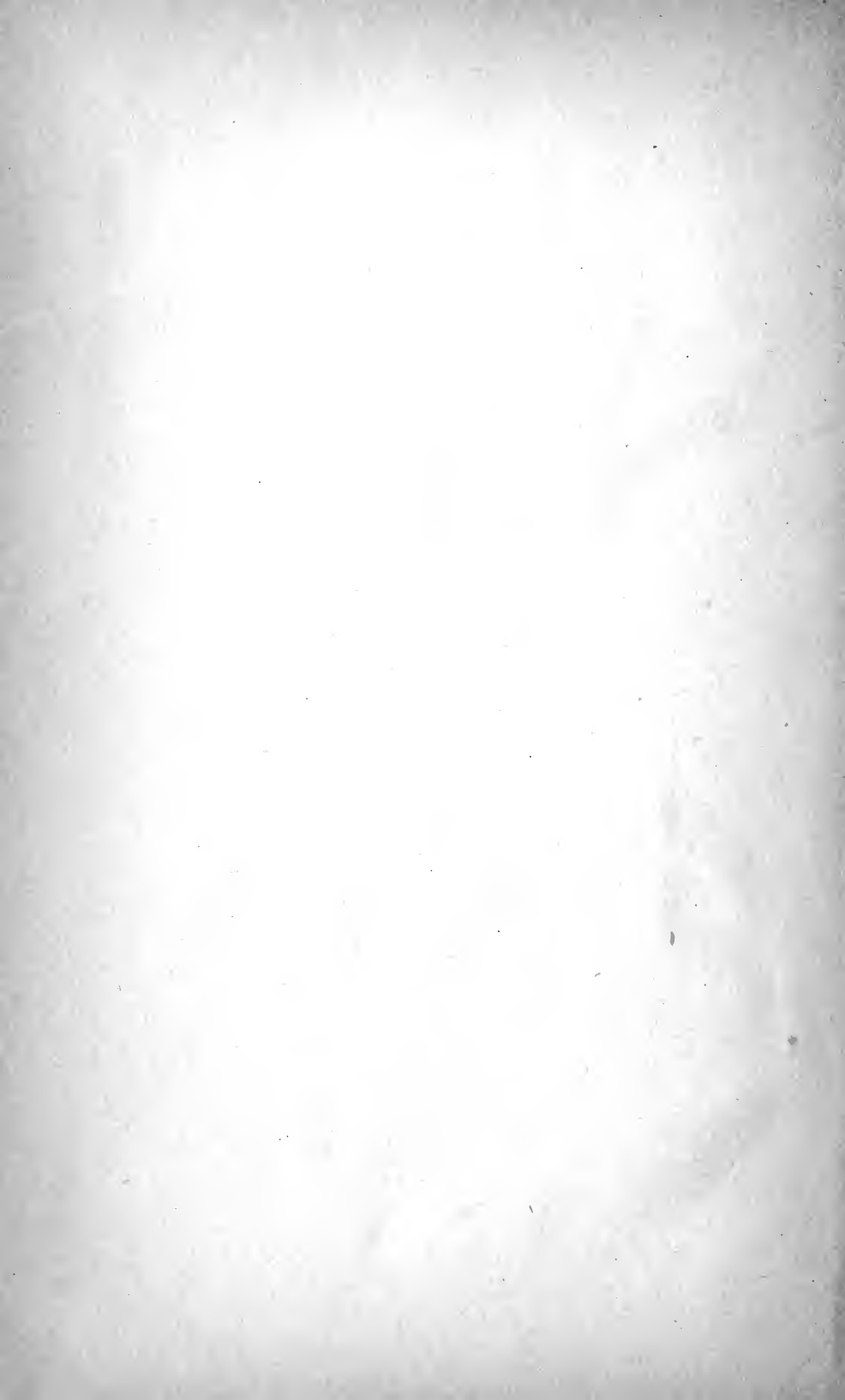
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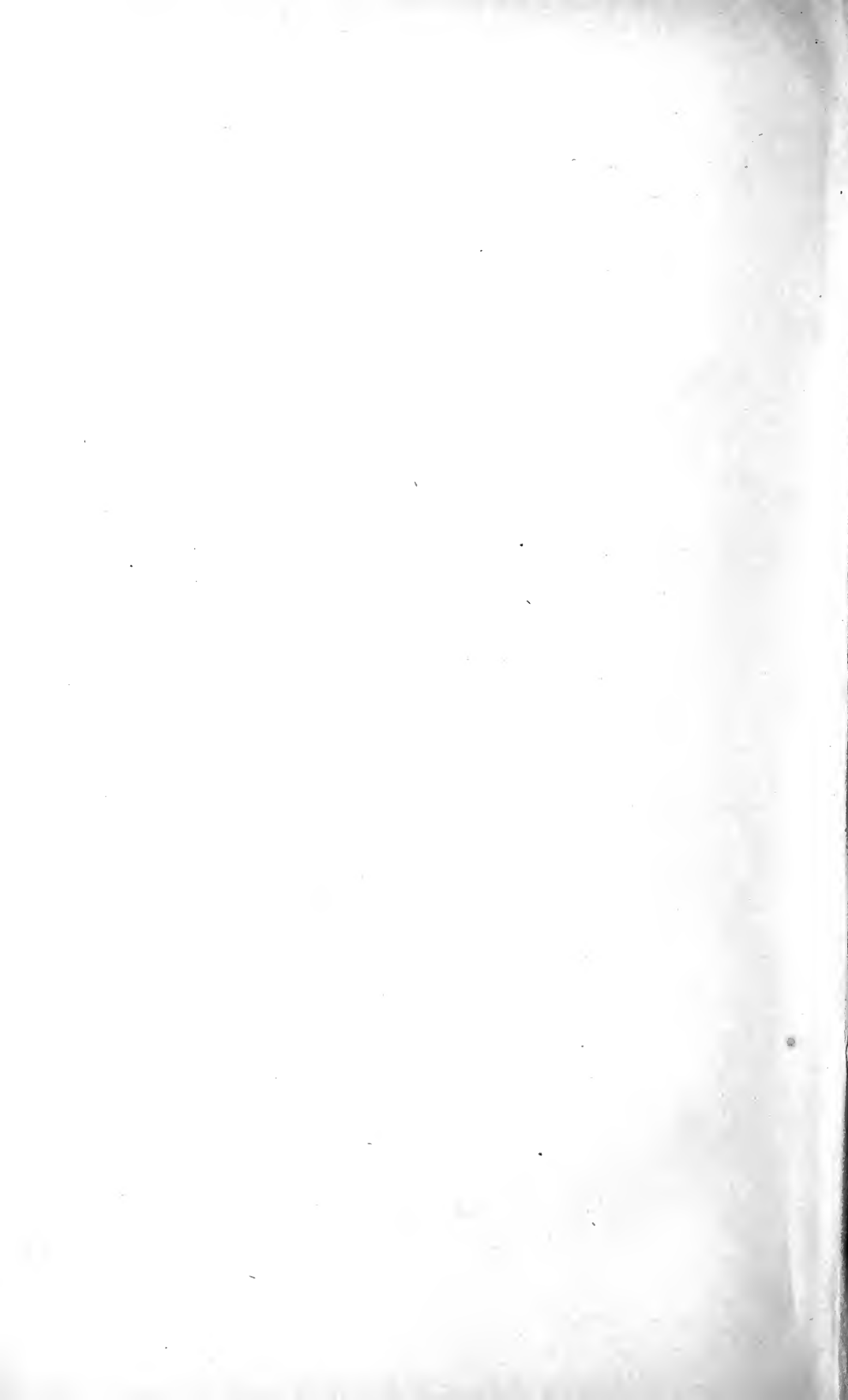








STUDIES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT



STUDIES

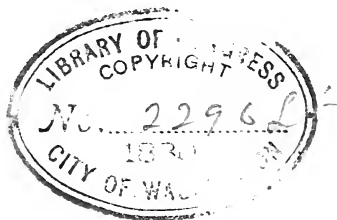
IN THE

NEW TESTAMENT

BY

CHAS. S. ROBINSON D.D.

Pastor of the Memorial Church New York City



NEW YORK

CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

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1880

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1880.

TROW'S
PRINTING AND BOOKBINDING CO.,
201-213 *East 12th St.*,
NEW YORK.

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PREFACE.

THESE studies in the New Testament were not designed for pulpit discourses, although some of them may seem like sermons. They were prepared as articles for a religious newspaper, in connection with the series of International Lessons.

The author does not care to change the pieces from their colloquial form, lest they should appear unfamiliar to those who have expressed the wish to have them in a volume.

MEMORIAL CHURCH,

New York, February 15, 1880.

STUDIES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

I.

PEACE WITH GOD.

THEREFORE BEING JUSTIFIED BY FAITH, WE HAVE PEACE WITH GOD
THROUGH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.—*Romans 5:1.*

WE live in one great world of trouble. It is probable that such a remark has been made before. People hardly imagine any one has said an original thing when he has repeated it. But in most cases they would follow it up with some other remarks, about themselves or their families or their neighbors, in which a plausible theory might be set forth as to the ways in which the trouble has been actually brought on; that is, as they look at the subject.

There is no need of any differences among thinkers on this point; for the unerring word of inspiration plainly says that the disturbing force is *sin*. All the world's confusions, perplexities, and sorrows grow up, in one way or another, out of men's transgressions and defiant disregard of law.

Sin makes trouble.Sicilian shadows.

Yet not everybody chooses to admit that. Certain duties to be performed, certain pressures of conscience giving pain, are likely to be offered in the discussion, if we urge into much conspicuousness the relations between the human will and the divine. It will be asserted that traditions of anger in the Supreme Being, some report of possible threats early made, coupled with an industrious reiteration of foreboding by a few credulous alarmists, have done most of the mischief. It would soon quiet down, if men and women would just take comfort in what is given them and let pre-sages alone.

Tourists say that across the fair plains of Sicily, with the rising of every new dawn, stretches one deep line of darkness, drawn by the pyramidal form of Mount Etna. It is the unvarying reminder of the ruin that may at any hour fall heavily from the volcano's crater. And yet the inhabitants forbid you to speak of that giant phantom which lies sleeping upon their gardens and meadows through all those smiling villages. They do not altogether admit, in so many words, that any one hopes to keep the lava from bursting or burning, by turning toward the mountain the cold shoulder of blank indifference; but they do assert, most strenuously, that conversation about the matter is not going to better the case, and only renders people more uncomfortable all around. It is true always there, that the brighter is the day, the plainer is the outline of shadow; and hence every joy they possess exhibits the more surely

The troubled sea.Antagonism.

the precursor of sorrow and peril. But good-breeding is invoked to check passing remarks which in timid persons might force a shudder, or possibly drive a melancholy mind into fear.

Thus we live under the immediate shadow of divine wrath. The gloomy projection lies across the land. Men choose to think that there is nothing but incivility in a reminder of the coming day of final judgment. It jars on delicate nerves. Still, it is better to believe that a few desire to be intelligent. What is it that breaks up the peace in this world? What will bring tranquillity and rest?

“There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked. I create the fruit of the lips—peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near, saith the Lord, and I will heal him. But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.”

Can any one be mistaken? In all this familiar passage it is made evident that the worry and unrest of the human soul depend simply upon its moral state. If it is in antagonism with God, then a deep-seated source of irritation and uneasiness is lodged in the centre of its being. No quiet can possibly be found until that soul comes to be at one with God, and adjusts all its purposes to meet his declared will. “The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.” Hence, the words of that fine verse in Isaiah’s prophecy : “The work of righteousness shall be peace ; and the

Justification.A legal term.

effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever ; and my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting-places."

The question all turns, therefore, upon the possession of what in the New Testament is termed *justification*—the same thing as what is also called *righteousness* : "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ : by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God."

It becomes us in the outset to understand that righteousness is a purely individual acquisition. The gospel deals with human beings one by one. A nation is to be converted in no other sense than in the conversion of the men, women, and children that compose it. And in all our pictures of the world in pain, it is never to be forgotten that the source of annoyance is in the sinfulness of a heart, not of a community or a corporation. Whenever any one person yields his love to Christ, he does in that way more than he can do in any other way to relieve the world of confusion. For, in so far as his influence is to be reckoned at all, his measure of righteousness brings a measure of peace.

What, then, is this "justification by faith," about which so much is said ? In a mere theological form of reply perhaps no good will be found, but statements like these need to be accurate. The term is entirely legal. A sinner is conceived as condemned at the bar of God's justice ; the punishment for his sins is death. Now

The surety.Paul's picture.

Jesus Christ, as a redeemer and surety, comes and assumes the sinner's exposures and liabilities. In effect, he stands in the sinner's place.

This is the picture so often presented by the apostle Paul in more than one of his remarkable chapters ; he appears never to be tired of it. Vividly seeming to see the crucifixion scene, that in which Jesus on the cross is the central figure, he explains its mystery by declaring that this perfectly holy being was suffering not for any sins of his own, but for the sins of another. Jesus was making an atonement for men. Hence, a substitution was effected for all that would accept him by faith. It is the mere plainness of this action which renders Paul's language so dramatic and picturesque. He can behold nothing more nor less than a Redeemer bearing men's guilt, and giving them his merit. So his descriptions swell with strong feeling, and fairly tremble with grateful acknowledgment.

"For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die : yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

Peace comes, therefore, when purity has come beforehand. "First pure, then peaceable." Saved souls are pardoned for Christ's sake ; God thereafter looks upon them as if they never had sinned. So the old standard formulates the doctrine : "Justification is an act of

“First pure.”Martin Luther.

God's free grace, wherein he pardoneth all our sins, and accepteth us as righteous in his sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone.” It is designed in these quoted verses to teach that just so long as any man is an unpardoned sinner, he will be disturbed and in trouble ; he cannot rest. But the moment he is justified by faith, and is forgiven in the name of the Lord Jesus, he is at peace. His nature is restored, his state of condemnation is changed. The earliest fruit and effect of his new righteousness is quietness and assurance forever.

The story is told of Martin Luther, whose hours of guilt and conviction were so filled with wild and fearful dreams, that once the evil one, Satan, appeared to enter his room, and with an air of insolent triumph displayed a vast roll of parchment, which he carried in his arms. Luther asked him what that was ; and received the alarming reply : “ It is a catalogue of all your former sins ! ”

He leaped from his bed in an impulse of mortal agony and terror. With a hollow burst of derisive laughter the fiend threw it on the floor, still holding one end in his hand so that it might easily unroll its awful length. There the frightened man was compelled to read, hour after hour, the terrible list of all the wicked deeds he had done in all his life. There were the offenses and follies of his youth. There were the transgressions of his riper years. He groaned in the bitterness of his soul, as he discovered, every now and then, some miser-

Lists of sins.The devil's perversion.

able little vileness, or some daring act of impiety, which he had almost forgotten, but here instantly recognized ; some unseen, undisclosed, secret transgression he had vainly imagined no one had detected, or even conceived he could commit.

There they all were ; and, oh, how black the ink seemed, and how imperishable the parchment seemed, and how long the great roll seemed, and how tightly the overjoyed devil in his fiery glee held it clenched in his fingers ! There the sins were ; just as he knew now some pen of a recording angel had noted them down ; just as he knew, beyond a doubt now, that God would one time set them before him in array under the light of his countenance. And his heart failed him as he gazed. He bent his head hopelessly in sorrow and shame, with a fearful foreboding of the wrath to come.

Suddenly the devil called him by name, and pointed to some words along the top of the roll just where his hand held it. Luther looked up and read aloud : "*All sin ;*" and then he understood that no one of the many acts, or even thoughts, was to be left out. His form began to shiver, and he says he was seized with a violent fit of trembling. Hell appeared opening at once under his feet. His agony was intense. He could not bear to look at the roll. But Satan kept screaming, "All sin ! all sin !" And at last, in order to afflict him the more, exclaimed, "So says God, so says God, all sin, all sin !"

"All sin."No more fear.

Now the man's study of Scripture stood him in excellent stead. For he looked up defiantly, saying, "Where speaks God that word?" And he sprang from his couch, a new thought in his mind. "In what chapter, and what verse? Where says God that?" he thundered with clear voice like a trumpet of challenge. "There, there!" answered the devil, pointing again to the parchment, and putting his fiery finger on the two words, "all sin, all sin." The reformer, brave for a moment with a blessed thought in his heart, snatched the awful list away from his enemy, and unrolling it one turn more, in the other direction, discovered, as he hoped he would, the remainder of the inscription. There it explained itself; to be sure, Satan had quoted correctly, for he read, "all sin, all sin." But right above these were the other words, as in the Bible: "The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, *cleanseth* us from all sin!" So he learned that all that his sins had been massed together upon that roll for, was in order to announce that atonement had been made completely to cover them. And with a glad cry of exultant joy he awoke, while the devil disappeared with all his parchment of sorrow and woe.

It is when a man knows his sins are all in the burden Jesus bore on the Calvary cross, that he has no longer any fear about them. The work of righteousness is peace, and the effect of righteousness is quietness and assurance forever. Being justified by faith,

Conquered peace.Espousal to Christ.

he has peace. And now he settles down, like a returned prodigal, just to learn how he can do most to please his Father. He begins to understand his own devious history. He sees a new meaning to his life. He recognizes the fact that God is wiser than he supposed. For while this hard will of his has been wandering foolishly around after rest, the gentleness above has been guiding him into greatness in despite of himself. All peace in this world is a conquered peace. Now we, who have been in warfare, see that in fighting others we have been triumphing over ourselves; when we attempted to subdue Satan, we at least brought home a subdued spirit of our own. We are sure that the past is altogether safe, and the future will be secure, for God is leading us all the way.

“And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.”

It is not possible to put into forms of colloquial speech the sources of enjoyment which a pardoned believer knows when he is once possessed of the peace which passes understanding; the soul like a bride rests in a love it cannot explain, when the sweet day of espousal to Christ has been reached. The Christian cannot be alone, for a happy con-

The soul's Sabbath.Richard Baxter.

science, like a bird in his heart, keeps singing cheerily to give him company. He has no alarms, no suspicions. Nothing breaks up the calm, bright serenity of his trustful repose in Christ Jesus. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusteth in thee." Such an one has reached the final tranquillity of the soul.

"Far, far beneath—the noise of tempest dieth,
And silver waves chime ever peacefully;
And no rude storm, how fierce soe'er it fieth,
Disturbs the Sabbath of that deeper sea."

Nor is this all: peace brings prosperity. God opens the door of his treasury of promise to the souls he has welcomed into the palace. He loves his Son, and they are his Son's friends. The moment we are certain of a Saviour's love, all inferior considerations vanish. If our feet are upon the Rock of Ages it does not matter at all where the danger threatens. Mourning, desertion, disappointment, poverty, sickness—nothing can bear us away before it. We do not even fear the king of terrors, nor shrink from the rack of nature as he draws near. "I have pain," said Richard Baxter, on his dying bed, "I have pain; there is no arguing against sense; but then, I have *peace, great peace!*" To any true believer, there is no shock in the appearance of that messenger who announces his departure. He seems to himself even now sitting in the antechamber of the palace, waiting; and death is

The antidote.A criminal.

only the black-dressed servant who comes out to say the king is ready to see him in the throne-room.

Now surely it is worth something, in a world like this, to find one antidote for wakefulness and unrest. This is the peace which the world can neither give nor take away. Once we are forgiven, our hearts are in perfect content. Our natures have reached their full satisfaction in God. Thus we reason: God has redeemed us; he had his purpose in it; he gave his Son to suffering and shame; therein we rest; "much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him; for if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life."

Each Christian receives a testimony in his soul which settles all his fears for the future. He has put his case out of his own hands; he cannot even ruin it by his own folly of mismanagement; he has an advocate at last with the Father whom he can trust implicitly, even Jesus Christ the righteous. So he waits tranquilly for the judgment, knowing he is prepared for it, and shall stand clear in the end.

Years ago, I somewhere read of a criminal on trial for capital misdemeanor. The evidence proved most overwhelmingly against him. The law was explicit. There seemed no avenue of escape. The people grew anxious in his behalf, as the verdict of condemnation inevitably drew nearer. Yet all the while this prisoner at the bar

Pardon in possession.

Safe because "lost."

kept inexplicably calm. His eye never once quailed, although the most damaging facts continually came to light. At last the jury returned, and the fatal decision was rendered; and all that the culprit did was to draw a long sigh of unmistakable relief. The bystanders marvelled at his self-control, and grew curious over the secret of his serenity; and especially when they imagined they detected in his unembarrassed demeanor a strange sort of triumph.

By and by, when the sentence of death was pronounced, he arose in his place, and laid before his judges a full pardon for the crime of which he had been just now convicted—a pardon which all along he had held hidden in his bosom. They examined the roll with eager scrutiny, and found that it really was his discharge. It left no further question. It had indeed been signed by the hand of their generous sovereign, and sealed with the grand signet of the realm. There remained no more to be done. And amid the shouts of the people the man went immediately forth free. The law's demands were cancelled.

Now, does it need to be asked what was the secret of this quiet assurance? He had looked on himself as convicted from the very commencement of the trial, and in that fixed expectation found his entire comfort. Every item of testimony which pointed toward his possible exculpation was really just so much in his way, and always caused him anxiety. For he knew he was guilty, and he could not use a pardon unless he was condemned.

Robert Browning.The Talmud.

Hence, with each step in the evidence that pressed heaviest, his joyous hopes rose. He was nearing deliverance. He could say : "I am safe, because I am lost !"

Fine illustration is this throughout of a true Christian's ineffable peace. He owns himself the very culprit he is at the bar of divine justice. To clear him would be to deprive him of all interest in the atonement, and shut him away out of Christ ; for Christ came not to save righteous people, but sinners. He knows, therefore, that he cannot be pardoned unless he is first found guilty. And the moment he is condemned, he takes his pardon out of his bosom and stands free in the grace of God. Being justified by faith, he has peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

There is no other way of relief than this. The trouble in the world is met by the gospel of peace. Hence the force of Robert Browning's couplet :

" He who first made us see the chains we wore,
He also strikes the blow that shatters them."

And that gospel admits of no improvement, however fair and promising. The old fable of the Talmud is a parable. There was a flute in the Temple, preserved from the days of Moses. It was smooth, thin, and formed of a reed. At the command of the king, it was overlaid with precious gold. And thus its sweetness was ruined till the gold was taken away.

II.

THE SECURITY OF BELIEVERS.

AND WE KNOW THAT ALL THINGS WORK TOGETHER FOR GOOD TO THEM THAT LOVE GOD, TO THEM WHO ARE THE CALLED ACCORDING TO HIS PURPOSE.—*Romans 8: 28.*

IN a life like this, where nobody seems able to do more than conjecture and surmise, suppose, imagine, and speculate, it is a comfort to find even one man who can honestly declare he *knows* to a certainty that what he says is true. And indeed, it is still more remarkable, and still more comforting withal, to find that what he knows is that exactly which we have had most doubt about. Hence no words in the New Testament come to us with more welcome or more wonder than these: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

Without doubt, the apostle is following on closely with his train of argument; and so these utterances must be connected with what goes before, and of course will find their first as well as their most legitimate explanation in the context. He means by this expression, "all things," all of which he has been speaking, all *these* things. And these are what he calls in general terms "the sufferings of the present time." Hence the verse brings us at least this one thought, which in itself is

very valuable: whatever in the providential arrangements of our daily existence during this imperfect state can make our hearts to suffer, has a consolatory alleviation behind it, that it is a part of one omniscient plan for our permanent benefit. It is working with other things for our good.

Our perplexities and our harassments, our losses and our crosses, our wounded pride and our disappointed ambition, the desertion of our companion, the betrayal of our friend, our fears without and our fightings within, poverty, sickness, and bereavement, our doubts, our temptations, and our conflicts, indeed, whatever can make the brain weary or the heart sore—all these work together for good.

Such a verse as this, therefore, is simply priceless. It discloses a principle in the governing of this world which reduces everything to order. All these multiform and in many respects antagonistic agents are merely moving on to accomplish God's will for his chosen. Life is a beautiful picture of method and fixed law. The verse is worth an analysis, and might do for the text of a profitable sermon. All things act *energetically*—they “work.” All things act *harmoniously*—they “work together.” All things act *beneficently*—they “work together for good.” All things act *definitely*—they “work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”

The word rendered *work* here is one of the strongest in the language in which the New Testament was writ-

Divine energy.The river Chebar.

ten. It is that from which our word "energy" comes by derivation. And the apostle employs it to denote the intensest and most tireless activity possible or conceivable. The universe is all alive under the divine hand. Jesus Christ said, as if to enforce the thought, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." The earth rocks with the violence of the history that sweeps across it.

One grand vision there is presented to us in the Scriptures, which is intended to image directly the unresting and tireless providence of God. It is that which the prophet Ezekiel saw by the river Chebar, the living creatures and the wheels. As you study his description, no one characteristic will more impress itself upon your imagination than the limitless energy with which all their movements are accomplished. The living creatures had wings, but even the wings were stretched upward. They went; but we are told that when they went, they flew. They were like lamps; but the lamps seemed unable to be still; they blazed to and fro, up and down. They were like coals of fire; but the coals were neither lurid nor dull, they burned and flashed with kindled flame. And they "ran and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning."

Now, remember that all these are but symbols of the providential interpositions of God in human affairs. Let any thoughtful man cast his eye around the world as it has appeared during the past five or ten years. See how events have hurried. There has not been one

The Breaker.Orange-trees.

day of quiet in all the grand army of God. Despotisms have been overturned. Thrones have been moved. Many a door has been opened for the gospel almost as mysteriously as that of Simon Peter's prison by the angel from heaven. You may call these movements the advancement of civilization as you will ; they are really the "workings" of God in person. This is the fulfillment of prophecy : "The breaker is come up before them ; they have broken up and have passed through the gate, and are gone out by it, and their King shall pass before them, and the Lord on the head of them." One purpose of God rules the whole world.

What is that purpose ? The verses which follow this one state it clearly : "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called : and whom he called, them he also justified : and whom he justified, them he also glorified." Here is one vast plan to bring home the sons of God to glory ; and they have to be chosen, trained in spirit, called, justified by an atonement, and glorified. The purpose is complex in particulars, and no one was ever able just to arrange the details in order of time. To our human eyes God's decrees seem—like oranges in the tropics—to be growing on the tree of life, blossoms and fruits at the very same moment. When he began to predestinate, or when he will cease to glorify, we cannot say. But it is evident that he is agi-

Working "together."Wheels.

tating the race with all these decrees at once. The principal difficulty we experience, and the chief mistake we make, is in thinking that because we can see how things *work*, we can also pronounce how they work *together*. We try to adjust the wheels in the middle of the wheels.

In the proudest moment of our vaunting wisdom, we find ourselves entirely at fault in prediction. Results prove our computations to be puerile and vain. We are wont to look upon the world part at a time. We imagine we quite understand the architecture of the universe when we have examined one brick under a microscope. We study history piecemeal, and are fain to complain that it eludes all law of sagacious anticipation. Why should it not? For God brings to naught the *things that are* by the *things that are not*; and when the information of most of us is so short concerning things that *are*, who shall say he is acquainted with all the possibilities of things that are *not*?

Hence our impertinence. Because we are disappointed, we assert that the race is governed by a reckless caprice. Comets of "things that are not," keep dashing in among the planets "that are," which we had just got arranged to suit our plan when we had arisen to prophesy. And we cry out that life is unsettled, and events are lawless. Some wheels, we deem ourselves profound enough to say, are working in the wrong direction. Some levers, we are certain, act backward and cause collision. It needs a great

Everything right now.God's river.

deal of humility to admit that we know nothing about the manner in which the spiritual adjustments are made, and tranquilly to rest in the satisfied conclusion that all the machinery of divine government is managed safely, and is under intelligent control. All things work "together."

Nor is this all: even the highest faith seems sometimes to think it has reached proper measure of acquiescence when it can say that all will be right *by and by*. True confidence is that which can answer, it is all right *now*. One fine point there is in this verse which must not be overlooked. Inspiration sometimes resides in a tense of grammar. And the verse does not assert—all things *will* work together for good—but all things *are* now working. The mutual arrangements for advantage are moving forward this very day and hour. Your little trouble and mine, yesterday and this morning, is fully as much embraced in the divine plan as Ahasuerus' sleepless night, Paul's shipwreck, or Isaiah's martyrdom. God's understanding is clear, and anticipatory of these human experiences.

We must rid our minds of the impression that the stream of almighty providence is like a turbid rivulet, which a child knows he must wait to have settled before it will run crystal after a storm. God's river of human life is impenetrable to our eyes, not because it is roiled with the rubbish of earthly confusion, but because in itself it is deep and shadowy in majestic

On the banks.The saints' song.

windings of its channel. If a man supposes that he can always fathom a purpose which begins at the throne of the Lamb, runs through foreknowledge and predestination, touches at conformity and the supremacy of Christ, flows across effectual calling, broadens into justification, and ends in glory, he has poor register of his own attainments and wonderful conceit of his own gifts. He who sits down on the banks of the two verses I have just quoted, would do well to let sounding-lines alone, and look along the sweet shores where he will find many a tree with glorious fruitage, whose leaves are for the healing of the nations.

So here is a moment for us to sing a bright song. All things not only work together, but work together "for good." The expression, literally rendered, would read, they work together *into* good. They all play into one grand purpose, and that is beneficent in its bearing altogether. "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth: who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."

Now let us note, for one thing, that this good of

Individual good.We shall know hereafter.

which the apostle is speaking is individual good, as distinct from universal. Hitherto it has been deemed a necessary element of all human philosophies that now and then it should be expedient to have one man die for the nation; that in some instances an isolated interest must be struck down in order to save the public weal. But with God this is not so. No friction nor fracture can be found in his government. The "good" is for all because it is for each. The general good is secured by securing the individual good universally.

And then let us note, for another thing, that this good of which the apostle is speaking is real good, as distinct from apparent. Under the gospel these do indeed often coincide. Honor and thrift, success and fame, accrue not infrequently to the Christian. But this is all adventitious; the aim is at the real good, whether it can be seen or not seen. What that may be in any specific case, God knows best; and he acts on his own knowledge, not on our impressions or in answer to our desires. That is to say, he is the judge concerning the particular good for the accomplishment of which all the agencies of his providence are moving forward.

So it may be quite possible, and doubtless it is often the case, that circumstances of deepest trial are all the time working for our prodigious advantage; and yet the world is pitying our misfortune, and even we ourselves are disposed to murmur at the sharp lot, rather than wait for the result of the discipline.

The chrysalis state.Am I his?

“Here in our chrysalis state we lie,
Shaping our wings for a heavenly birth;
And the spirit, which fain would mount and fly,
Is bound by life’s pitiful clogs to earth.
But sooner or later its chains shall be riven;
We shall gain the knowledge for which we sigh;
Why much was withheld, and little given—
We shall know God’s reason by and by.”

Meantime, it must never be forgotten that providence works definitely, and chooses its own beneficiaries. The recipients of God’s favor are—on the human side—those “that love God;” and—on the divine side—those who are the “called according to his purpose.” Whoever loves God is the elect of God. Whether any one of us in particular, therefore, is of right embraced in such an announcement as that we have been studying, depends on a solemn question yet unanswered, “Am I his, or am I not?” Once that is settled, the security of each believer is fixed. “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long, we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us.”

In one supreme moment now real Christians sweep out of their individual nothingness, and become the very notables—the kings and priests of Christ’s realm.

It may not be easy to explain philosophically how it

The widow's hymn.Minor disquiets.

happens that a believer's soul is perfectly at rest in the midst of tempestuous troubles, as soon as he is certain that Christ is his Saviour under the covenant ; but assuredly this is a fact. I once knew a devoted woman, whose husband was brought dead into her room, after an hour's departure in the fulness of strength. They laid him on the sofa, while the tearless wife sat distracted, smoothing his hair. No one could speak, as the awful hour passed on. Suddenly she turned to the hushed group of friends around : " Will some one please start a hymn ? " was her amazing request. They could not choose. One whispered, " God moves in a mysterious way." Another suggested, " In the Christian's home in glory." But they finally appealed to the mourner to make her own choice. She exclaimed instantly, " Not all the blood of beasts."

They obeyed, of course ; and through the first two or three stanzas she simply beat the time with an unconscious gesture. But as they advanced, her voice began to join with the others. When they reached, " My faith would lay her hand," she suddenly spoke the words, and sang on, while her eyes filled with sweet, natural tears. And in the last verse she found her comfort, for her soul went wholly out in joy under the fresh sense of pardoned sin : if only her future was secure, what mattered earthly trial now ?

The meaning of all this experience seems to be found in the fact that, once the Christian reaches his spiritual rest in a Saviour, all minor disquiets cease to disturb

Nothing going awreck.God's love.

him. When sin is removed, God is his father, Jesus is his elder brother, and heaven is his home. Hence he abides in the confidence of an unfaltering faith.

What new significance such a consideration puts upon our daily life ! See where we are to-day. One all-per-vading spirit agitates the world. The old earth is but the field now where redemption is working out for our race ; God spares the planet yet a while from final fires just for that. We see strange sights and cannot understand them. Dismal forebodings, falling fortunes, thwarted plans, tumults, wars, pestilences, and earthquakes — all this world is restless and alarmed. Still nothing is going awreck. “O ye of little faith ! why are ye troubled ?”

Let the deluge rise at will : it will only bear each floating ark nearer heaven. “For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

III.

CHRISTIAN LOVE.

AND NOW ABIDETH FAITH, HOPE, CHARITY, THESE THREE; BUT THE GREATEST OF THESE IS CHARITY.—1 *Corinthians* 13: 13.

IN an old ecclesiastical tradition it is related of the apostle John, who was then the very last of the chosen followers of Jesus, that in his closing years of feebleness, when too infirm for walking, he was wont to be borne into the Christian assemblies for the mere purpose of repeating a brief sentence: "Little children, love one another."

He was the apostle of love, as Paul was the apostle of logic. So it is exceedingly interesting to find Paul in one great instance giving a description of that peculiar grace which John had so urged and exemplified. For certainly everybody understands that the gift called "charity," in 1 *Corinthians* 13, is nothing more nor less than Christian love. Our later uses of the word have limited it, so that it refers now almost exclusively to generosity in the bestowment of alms. But in the New Testament it signifies that far-reaching brotherly affection which is the peculiar characteristic of the household of God.

Surely, if there be upon this earth anywhere a class

Desire above duty.

"Rabboni."

of persons who ought to be united in spirit, knit in judgment, earnest in defence of each other, considerate in every pronouncement, fraternally sincere and true, Christians are the ones who compose it. Love links them together, and renders their lot common.

Let us begin with the remark here that love is the essential principle of all genuine religion. For piety consists in *desire*, rather than in *duty*. We love God because he first loved us. This is why every chapter in the New Testament talks so much about the hearts of men. The heart was the old symbol of affection, and the gospel was meant to be a scheme of faith whose home should be located in the warmest and most vital centre of our being.

When the poor woman found her unostentatious way to the very couch of our Lord, as he sat at meat, and began to wash his feet with her tears and wipe them with the hairs of her head, the highest encomium which could be pronounced on her in the presence of the proud Simon was this: "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she *loved* much." This affection, which Christians feel, is in every case called forth into its strength by the manifested affection of the Redeemer. He says to each child of his, with inexpressible tenderness, "Mary," and the name he uses announces his feeling. The only answer, therefore, which is befitting, is always the same, "Rabboni." The vast difference between our love and his is, that we find him the one altogether lovely, and so we love him the moment we truly

see him ; but he loves us as we are, and by his very unmerited affection renders us lovely.

Here, then, is a test for universal use in self-examination. It is love that makes the Christian. It is not talent ; for Paul says : " Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal." It is not gifts ; for Paul says : " And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge ; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing." It is not merit ; for Paul says : " And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." It is simply love, and in the growth of love is found our progress.

No matter how frequently one fasts ; no matter how faithfully one pays tithes for the poor ; no matter how many nor how long may be one's prayers ; no matter how musical the song one may sing ; is the love of God shed abroad in one's heart ?—that is the question. " Love is the fulfilling of the law." God has always honored simple affection more than great gifts. The work of this world is often done by the most inconspicuous people. The little ministries of every-day life, sometimes more than the showy exploits of unusual effort, are what seem to have called from the Master the most hearty approval, and received the rewards of grandest success.

Hence we may observe, in the second place, that love is the principle of all genuine social life. "If God so loves us, we ought also to love one another." Christians profess to have a mutual likeness to the one Saviour of all. They are the children of one Father's household. They claim a sovereign interest in the common salvation. Hence, they must love each other as kindred.

Moreover, they are under equal exposures. The world drives up against them on the outside. They have perils from the same direction. A harsh censure, which falls on one to-day, it may be another's lot to have to bear to-morrow. Biting criticisms that for one sharp hour light on you, are just as likely to come and sting me the next. It would be wise to organize for mutual defence.

Then again: we all have the same work—a work which will be certain to render one unwelcome and unpopular in proportion to the faithfulness which he bestows upon it. If we sit down together on some restful evening, we shall find that the rehearsals of our religious histories will be pretty much the same. Our falls into alarming temptation may have their personal peculiarities, and bear the image of our temperaments and education; but we all have had falls. One has been in doubt over a certain action; the other has been clear; but now, to be frank about it, the other has had his perplexity upon a different point. It is time we comforted each other with a comparison of tasks and of patience under them.

What charity is.Three readings.

Bring together thus a company of those of like character, of similar exposures, and with the same work to do, and it becomes absolutely necessary that some sort of principle of association, by which intercourse may be facilitated, should be established among them. "Behold how good a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" Here comes in the chapter we have been quoting. Paul, as if in despair of making final impression by a mere statement, introduces a detailed description of the grace he is commending. He tells us what charity is by saying what it will do: "Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."

Now if I were teaching a class the lessons of this chapter, I would have these verses read over aloud three times by the three best scholars I had, with a new substitution of a word in each instance. I would put in the word "gentleman" first, and see how it would sound to say, "A *gentleman* suffereth long and is kind: beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." Or, perhaps, "A *lady* doth not behave herself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil." Thus I judge I could make young people understand that

Good breeding.The model Master.

in genuine Christian behavior is found the highest politeness.

Then next I would introduce the word thus: "A *Christian* rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth." Or thus: "A *Christian* envieth not; a *Christian* vaunteth not himself, is not puffed up." For in this way I should hope I might show every one what a far reach true piety has; how it covers all the ordinary courtesies of life, and pushes out into endeavors of kindness toward every soul that is in trouble.

But, chief of all, it would give me real delight to hear one reading aloud the whole passage with the word "*Christ*" in it in the place of "*charity*;" for thus would come to light the grand lesson, that in Jesus, our divine Lord, is found the highest embodiment of grace and glory. What a commentary the whole New Testament furnishes on these words: "Christ suffered long and was kind; Christ envied not; Christ vaunted not himself, was not puffed up; Christ bore all things, believed all things, hoped all things, endured all things!" He who is the Master was also the Model.

Move forward now for a third observation. Love is the principle of all eminent zeal. Those who are in earnest for doing good are the likeliest to be safe from doing evil. There is instruction in the story a Persian writer tells of himself. "Having once in my youth," says he, "notions of severe piety, I used to

A Persian story.

Leander.

rise in the night to pray and read the Koran. And on one occasion, as I was engaged in these exercises, my father, a man of practical religion and of eminent virtue, awoke while I was studying aloud. I said to him, 'Behold, thy other children are lost in slumber, but I alone wake to praise God.' And he answered, 'Son of my soul, it is better to sleep than to wake to remark the faults of brethren.'"

Outside work is the best relief for dyspeptic carping. But there is no comfort in work where there is not love as the motive of it. God loved the world; Christ loved the souls he died to redeem; Christians are moved by love for those around them; or else the work is drudgery, and can never claim blessing.

What will not love do and dare? With only an earthly object Love swam the Hellespont, and gave a name to every Hero who holds out a torch. With no more than filial strength, it sent Coriolanus back from treason at the gates, and delivered Rome from downfall. Once having place in the heart of a Christian, it rouses him to energy almost superhuman. "I would think it greater happiness," said Matthew Henry, "to gain one soul to Christ, than mountains of gold and silver to myself: if I do not gain souls, I shall enjoy all other gains with very little satisfaction: and I would rather beg my bread from door to door than neglect this great work."

Love seems actually inexhaustible, while other graces change. This is the reason why the apostle com-

Summerfield.John Knox.

mends it the most: "Charity never faileth; but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away." Instances have been known in which this passionate love for souls has worn out the strength of the heart in which it dwelt, without seeming to lessen in its volume. Some of us whose early home was among the forests remember how the choppers used to take coals out of one brush-heap to light another; they would place them all alive upon a thick wisp of straw, and then rush through the air with the smoke and flame streaming behind them; but the straw would burn as they ran, and, when the coals dropped on the rubbish, would burst into a flash and consume itself with its burden. That was Montgomery's figure by which he sought to describe Summerfield; he said he carried the blaze which kindled others, and that burned himself to ashes. His charity never failed till himself vanished away.

This zeal, the principle of which is love, is very courageous. It forgets itself; it grows humble as it grows strong. It becomes all things to all men, in the hope it may save some; and it is all the more upright when it bends. Queen Mary burst into tears of the bitterest vexation and grief, when John Knox told her of duty and rebuked her for sin. And the stubborn old Scotchman wept as profusely as she did, while he uttered those memorable words: "Madam, in God's

Whitefield.The heart lives forever.

presence I speak : I never delighted in the weeping of any of God's creatures : yea, I can hardly abide the tears of my own boys when my hands correct them : much less then can I rejoice in your Majesty's weeping : but seeing I have offered unto you no just occasion to be offended, I must sustain these tears, rather than I dare hurt my conscience or betray the commonwealth by silence."

But then, how gentle this love is also ! Love is never noisy, never violent, when it seeks to win its way. This is the only natural force that works by tenderness. It made Paul weep, it filled the eyes of Jesus with tears. Yet there is no effeminacy in it. John, who spoke most about it, was one whom they called Boanerges, because he was a "son of thunder." Such love is effective when everything else would fail. "I came to break your head," once said a rough man to Whitefield, with a big stone in hand ; "but by the grace of God you have broken my heart."

And so at the last let us observe that love is the principle of heavenly enjoyment. "Your *heart* shall live forever." This wonderful charity issues in a completeness at the limit of life, that the life itself which it tenanted never knew, nor even suspected : "For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child : but when I became a man, I put away childish things."

The new life.Plato's cave.

“Nothing resting in its own completeness
Can have power or beauty; but alone
Because it leads or tends to further sweetness,
Fuller, higher, deeper, than its own.
Life is only brighter when it proceedeth
Toward a truer, deeper life above;
Human love is sweetest when it leadeth
To a more divine and perfect love.”

What that other existence out before us will be, we are not fully told. But love will certainly reign in heaven where God is, for God is love. Old friends will be reached again. The parted and the pure will find each other once more. The chief characteristic of that life would seem to be its permanency. The Scripture takes greatest pains to show us that in this dazzling, fading, illusive universe there is, after all, one thing which shall stand in the wreck of matter and the crush of worlds. “The world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God shall abide forever.” A will subdued to a will that is divine is peremptorily, authoritatively, declared to be imperishable.

But our disclosures are as yet withheld, and our visions are quite imperfect. It was the conception of an ancient philosopher that the human soul was standing, as it were, in the recesses of a vast cavern, and gained all its knowledge of the future state by a careful study of the weird figures from without which traced themselves along on the dimly-lit inner walls. Let us accept the image for a moment. The Christian believer seems

The final vision.Love is all.

now to be waiting as if within a hollow cave, girt by the rock on every side. Often through the narrow fissure which faith has found, come struggling in a few faint rays of illumination, that only half reveal the mysteries of his hard and cheerless home ; and now and then there is a gleam of a shadowed picture on the stones around him which indicates the existence and shows the beauty of the magnificent realities without. Beyond the stony barriers he can hear the rush and roll of a spiritual life, of which he learns too little to satisfy his yearning. He longs for the rock-rent through which he knows he is one day to pass. He is a child ; but the time will come when he shall put away childish things, and be forever a man.

At last the hour arrives. He hears beforehand, and perhaps trembles as he hears, the groanings and rumblings of the final convulsion. The earth quakes, the ground is opened, the walls divide, the prison is dissolved, and the soul is free. And oh ! what a sight is that which now bursts upon his vision ! “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be ; but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.” “For now we see through a glass, darkly ; but then face to face ; now I know in part ; but then shall I know even as also I am known.”

Thus, then, the end of our exposition is reached. When we understand that love is the principle of all

The secret of order.The drowning man.

genuine personal religion, the principle of all genuine social life, the principle of all genuine and eminent zeal, and the principle of all hoped-for heavenly enjoyment, then we are ready to accept the strong statement of the apostle with which he closes the chapter: "And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three: but the greatest of these is charity."

For here is the secret of all composure in the universe. "I am going," said the dying Hooker, "to leave a world disordered and a church disorganized, for a world and a church where every angel and every rank of angels stand before the throne in the very post God has assigned."

And here is the secret of all success in the winning of souls. A man had broken through the ice, and was drowning in the Merrimac River. The neighbors sought to save him with a plank thrust out over the edge. Twice he caught it and slipped back in the stream. Then he had just strength to say, "Oh, for heaven's sake, give me the wood-end of the plank!" They pulled it in, and found that the end they offered was round and chill with ice. They changed it; and then his numb fingers clasped the friendly board, and he was saved. Ah, me! we must, in saving souls, present something besides the ice-end of a mere conventional piety!

IV.

VICTORY OVER DEATH.

SO WHEN THIS CORRUPTIBLE SHALL HAVE PUT ON INCORRUPTION,
AND THIS MORTAL SHALL HAVE PUT ON IMMORTALITY, THEN
SHALL BE BROUGHT TO PASS THE SAYING THAT IS WRITTEN,
DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP IN VICTORY.—1 *Corinthians* 15: 54.

VIRGIL tells us that when the pious Æneas visited his father, Anchises, in the Elysian Fields, and had to cross the Styx at fabled Charon's Ferry, the frail boat, accustomed to carry only the tenuous forms of departed spirits, now receiving the heavy figure of a living man, writhed and creaked through all its sewed seams.

This was only a poet's conception, according to his light, of what the apostle gives us under inspiration, concerning the relations of the future life to the grossness of this: "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption."

We feel confident that no corporeal substance has place in a purely spiritual state. Yet what a purely spiritual state is really, it would be impossible for us to tell. It may be well to remember that death influences our human lot only as an intellectual notion. There is nothing in it which strikes back upon the fibre and substance of our existence. It is not like a

Death a mere idea.

The "sting."

blot of ink fallen in an open book, that it should stain the previous pages closed carelessly upon it; it bears on the future alone. If we could and would keep it out of mind, it would not render us unhappy. The animals all around us die, just as we do; but they give no evidence of being affected by the melancholy prospect.

A lamb goes dumb to the slaughter, because it has no sense of apprehension. It is our *idea* of death which brings us our horror. The imagination invests it with its dreadful gloom.

Hence the Scriptures attack the idea; they do not appear to try to disturb or rearrange the facts. The endeavor of the apostle's argument, in the epistle to the Corinthians, is directed toward the removal of an emotional feeling which he calls the *sting* of death. So he advances bravely to meet the issue, challenging a sharp attention by the admission that there is a fearful something, standing at the extreme limit of human life, which needs explaining: "Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality."

The parallel to this passage is found in the epistle to the Thessalonians, some expressions in which need al-

Three things.Final agonies.

ways to be laid alongside of it. Indeed, the popular mistake, that makes us shudder at this "mystery," is better indicated in the verse: "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope."

Here are three things: ignorance, sorrow, hopelessness; it would be impossible to find stronger terms by which to outline the universal thought, which Paul deprecates so earnestly.

"I would not have you to be *ignorant*." The moment that a simple want of information limits our progress, our imaginations begin to fashion for themselves and construct a future—just as ostriches run along the beaten road until they reach a ravine mist-covered, then they set out to fly among the clouds.

There is in the picture which ignorance draws a sense of ineffable loneliness. One spot there is now on the earth somewhere, waiting for us; one pathetic little reach of land, six feet by two, which is to grow solemn with the charge of our dust lying in it in expectation of the final judgment. "There are no bands in their death." One moment there is drawing nearer on the dial, which is to be awful with the weight of our solitary experience, when it is to bear away the last breath from our nostrils.

Then there is in the picture an appalling terror as to final agonies—an inexplicable alarm concerning what may be the experiences of the change we must meet.

Dr. Johnson.Ignorance proves nothing.

Of the old moralist, Dr. Johnson, his biographer tells us he was all his life in bondage, through fear of death. "His intellect resembled a vast amphitheatre; in the centre stood his judgment combating, like a mighty gladiator, those apprehensions, which, like the beasts of the arena, were all around him in the cells, ready to be let out any moment. After a conflict, he would sometimes drive them back into their dens: but not being able to kill them, he was ever and anon assailed again." Thus we all live, tortured by our terrors.

There is also in this picture a dread of disclosures beyond. The ship departs; that is bad enough—but, oh! where is it going to? When will it touch shore again? Providences are intricate; they do clear, however: the path winds more than ever here—alas! where does its untrodden length lead? So we repeat Job's words: "Are not my days few? cease then, and let me alone, that I may take comfort a little, before I go whence I shall not return, even to the land of darkness, and the shadow of death; a land of darkness, as darkness itself; and of the shadow of death, without any order, and where the light is as darkness."

Now, Lord Bacon has somewhere said that "true fortitude consists in not letting what we do know be disturbed by what we do not know." And he speaks wisely; for that is the precise thing which poor human nature finds most difficult to accomplish. Ignorance proves nothing; but our outlook is full of name-

Fable of the fagots.Roman epithets.

less horrors, because we have nothing else to fill it with—outside of the Bible.

Next to this comes grief : “That ye *sorrow* not,” adds the apostle. Men even in deepest distress cannot be made to see Death as a friend. In the old fable we used to read at school, the aged woodman fairly grew desperate as he cast his load of fagots from his sore shoulders : “Sitting down, he prayed for Death to come to his relief.” Suddenly Death did come, and inquired what he needed. “Nothing,” answered the frightened creature, bustling up on his feet ; “nothing, only to have some one help to put my bundle once more on my shoulder !”

There is in this sorrow a sense of bereavement ; we must go away from those we love. The Romans had thirty epithets for death ; and all of them were full of deepest dejection. “The iron slumber,” “the eternal night,” “the mower with his scythe,” “the hunter with his snares,” “the demon bearing cup of poison,” “the merciless destroying angel,” “the inexorable jailer with keys,” “the king of terrors treading down empires,”—some of them were these, the bitterness of which is indescribable.

Then there is a sense of laceration. We must tear ourselves away from the hills and the homes that know us. The more we have cared for the world, the more it keeps its hold upon us. There is a sort of injured feeling rankling in our hearts, as if somebody had cheated us out of a right, or deceived us in a prospect.

Worst of all, there is in this sorrow a sense of failure.

Hezekiah.

Socrates' sacrifice.

A consciousness of unfinished work, of incomplete accomplishment, is filling us with dissatisfaction. It happens that we have this all written out for our inspection under inspiration in one notable instance ; it is worth reading over as a revelation of human nature. "The writing of Hezekiah, king of Judah, when he had been sick, and was recovered of his sickness : I said, in the cutting off of my days, I shall go to the gates of the grave ; I am deprived of the residue of my years. I said, I shall not see the Lord, even the Lord, in the land of the living : I shall behold man no more with the inhabitants of the world. Mine age is departed, and is removed from me as a shepherd's tent ; I have cut off like a weaver my life ; he will cut me off with pining sickness ; from day even to night wilt thou make an end of me. I reckoned till morning, that as a lion, so will he break all my bones ; from day even to night wilt thou make an end of me."

The third element of popular experience which the apostle indicates is despair : "I would not have you as others which have *no hope*." Here now enters the working of conscience. At this point there is apparent a notion of guilt : "The sting of death is sin ; and the strength of sin is the law."

Hence, this hopelessness includes a sense of ill-desert. No man is free from it. Even wise old Socrates sacrificed a cock for an offering before he dared to die ; and he was what we call a sage ! Scientific men keep opening ancient tombs nowadays ; and it is astonishing what

Inexorableness.

Hobbes' confession.

treasures they find—gifts all packed up for the departed creature to make his way on with when he should get into immortal necessities of explanation and apology for a misspent life.

There is also a sense of inexorable justice. Something mysteriously forces the conviction on the minds of us all, that there is one court in this universe where decisions are rendered in accordance with facts and principles of law. We clap our hands when we hear a popular poet sing out energetically, "Thank God, man is not to be judged by man !" But that implies that he is to be judged by God ; and such a conclusion brings to most men an uneasiness. Solemn moment is that in which any soul reaches the full consciousness of approaching arraignment before the bar of Jehovah !

There is in this hopelessness also a sense of risk. It will interject itself into all our computations, this thought of something left unarranged at death. I cannot get myself ready. I am not master of the position enough to know what to do more. There are peradventures on ahead in that darkness that it is useless for me to try to meet. I must just take my chances as I am. The last words of one of the most courageous of all the famous infidels that have been watched as they died, were, "It is a leap in the dark !"

This, then, is the popular and necessary conception of death, up to that last great moment when the revelation which the New Testament furnishes breaks like beautiful sunshine through the unutterable gloom. Our

Jesus to Martha.The victory.

Lord Jesus came to bring life and immortality to light in the gospel. So the trustful believer is taught to sing, while his heart is swayed by the hopes of another life in view :

“In death, peace gently veils the eyes;
Christ rose, and I shall surely rise.”

That is to say, into this confused and melancholy state of things Christianity enters with a direct challenge and absolute contradiction of reversal. To real mourners there is only left a single comfort that will prove satisfactory. We may reason and argue, but all in vain. No assurance about its being better for the friends we have lost to be where they are : no chilly philosophy as to manly fortitude or womanly endurance : no professions of sincere sympathy counseling courage—nothing is sufficient for our terrible bereavements, except the calm declaration : “Thy brother shall rise again.” We insist upon the certainty that some time we must be reunited to the hearts we regret and remember with our tears.

Just there the Scripture meets us positively : “For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.” We cannot take away death, but we can take the sting out of death. We must enter the conflict with the last enemy : “But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.” At last there comes something authoritative. The moment we read a verse of inspiration like these we are studying, we feel

A meteoric stone.The cemetery.

as we do when we see a great meteoric stone—we say this is a piece of another planet. Just mark these opening words of the apostle : “ For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God : and the dead in Christ shall rise first : then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air : and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore, comfort one another with these words.”

So much, then, “ by the word of the Lord.” How this covers at once all the particulars we have mentioned ! This lonely spot away in a damp graveyard that makes us shudder—why, it is only a cemetery, after all ; and a *cemetery* is a *sleeping-place*. We shall remain in it only until sunrise. Then, too, this sense of failure in life ; Paul says there is no mistake or loss : “ Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.” No labor can be *in vain* which has God’s glory for its end. So of the nameless and indescribable fears that make us tremble ; this revelation of divine love simply takes a lamp and bears it into the mysterious shadows ahead of us, as a mother goes on before into a bedroom which her timid child had been filling with weird horrors. Oh,

A mother's lamp.Ships coming in.

how exquisite is that description of the New Jerusalem, which calls it "the *mother* of us all!"

The sense of bereavement is banished in the same way. It is the departed who are safe. Those we think we once lost are the very ones we have most securely. The sense of despair yields to the blessed certainty of hope. We shall find our old friends in heaven; we shall know them when we see them. The new life will be occupied partly in "knitting severed friendships up." And as for that awful dread of divine justice, it will be displaced by a wonderful peace; for we can rest implicitly in God's justice when Jesus the Saviour stands by, with the sure pardon in his hands!

It is according to one's hearty confidence in receiving this information that he will look forward toward the inevitable crisis. I sometimes think that people will enter heaven as the miscellaneous vessels enter New York Bay through the Narrows. Some will actually have to be tugged in by the violent faith and prayer of others, who will be at hand to help their feebleness as Christiana helped Ready-to-halt. Some will come in slowly and undecidedly, as if they dared to put up only a sail or two, and the wind was uncertain. But there will be many proud, glad ships, with all their spars covered with white canvas. To them will be "an entrance ministered abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

Very beautiful, therefore, rises this picture of the apostle upon our spiritual vision, and very inspiring is

Song of triumph.

"In the morning."

the song which floats through the air as we look at it :
"So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

"The night is far spent ; the day is at hand." We have as yet some few confusions, for the twilight shadows are hanging heavily over us ; but it will all be right in the morning :—

"Thus all through the world, by ship or by shore,
Where the mother bends over the cradle,
The tenant of which has just gone on before—
Where the lonely tread on in the ashes of woe—
Where the brave fight their foes and their fears—
Where the funeral winds, or the dirge murmurs low,—
Where the eyes of the lover, through dimness and tears,
Look aloft for the loved—oh, whatever the word,
A welcome, a wail, or a warning,
This is everywhere cherished, this everywhere heard—
'It will all be right in the morning!'"

V.

AN ORDAINED MINISTRY.

NOW THEN WE ARE AMBASSADORS FOR CHRIST, AS THOUGH GOD DID BESEECH YOU BY US: WE PRAY YOU IN CHRIST'S STEAD, BE YE RECONCILED TO GOD.—2 *Corinthians* 5: 20.

A SINGLE incident of the visit of Mr. Moody to New York came to my knowledge at the time. I give it in substance as related to me by one of the parties mentioned in it; I think it is quite true.

It seems that a gentleman, accustomed to attend the great assemblies at the Hippodrome, had invited one of his business associates to go with him to the meeting, and hear the evangelist speak. After the service was over, on the way home, he inquired of him how he liked the sermon. The answer was all he could have wished.

"I believe," said the man, with his manner full of unmistakable enthusiasm, "that, if the regular ministers would preach as that Moody does, they would have half the town running after them! It is grand to listen to the voice of such a representative of the people, no matter if he is ignorant and uneducated. But in the churches, the big scholars get up, and they are so stiff and so starched and so cold that there is no use in going to hear them."

Hippodrome meetings.

Mistaken identity.

Surprised at such an amount of information concerning the habits of metropolitan clergymen on the part of one who, as he supposed, rarely saw any one of them to know him, my informant inquired calmly, "Where do you usually attend church?" And the reply came as he expected, "Oh, I am one of the outsiders, as you call them; I have not been in a pew for many a year." But then he went on to say that he respected religion, and all that; he rented a sitting for his wife in the church on the corner of — Street and — Place. "But, why do you never go with her?" persisted his friend. "Because, as I said, they are all so prosy and stiff; if I knew a minister in this town who could preach a sermon like that we heard just now, I would go five miles every Sunday to listen to him!"

More amused than amazed, his companion turned on him with a single quiet remark: "Well, then, you had better try it next Sunday; for Mr. Moody was away to-day, and the man you heard in the Hippodrome was your wife's pastor, Rev. Dr. B —, of the church on the corner of — Street and — Place."

I. Let us consider, in the first place, one special phase of popular sentiment, plainly observable at the present day, and which, we are all agreed, deserves a somewhat thoughtful notice.

There is a clamor in the street for more "gospel" work among the "masses" of people hitherto quite imperfectly reached by usual forms of Christian zeal. This is right: no one can doubt it. A sad record has

been written on God's book against all the churches for many a year. Then it is added that extraordinary methods must be employed, of a more popular character, in order to interest the homeless multitudes, the wild, the vicious, and the poor. Most likely this is right too: Christians ought to be all things to all men, in the hope to save some. And then there is heard around us a serious arraignment of ministers as a class, for what is deemed the ill-adaptation of their measures; the stiff, stately, scholarly system of sermonizing, inappropriate and unattractive and unsuccessful. Well: it is not worth while here to deny this either. I presume most preachers feel somewhat demoralized, when they have to own that few have believed their report, and few are found to whom the arm of the Lord has been revealed savingly.

But now comes the suggestion of a remedy. And at this proposal one may be pardoned if he experiences a measure of consternation. It is claimed that the preachers must come forth from among the people, and must be of the people. Hence education has not so much to do with winning souls as sympathy; less heads and more hearts are the demand of this age. Scholarship renders men too refined for rough work. Then, too, denominationalism gets badly in the way. And, not to put too fine a point upon it, it has come to be better to have *lay-preachers* rather than *ordained*.

It is curious to notice how spiritual epidemics become

prevalent, at times, just like diseases. Only a few years ago, the great cry was raised against cherishing an inspired authoritative volume as being only a superstition. The taunt was flung widely over most of Christendom, that it was weak and unscholarly to believe such a being as God would issue a printed gospel: would you put confidence in a book-revelation? This talk was leading unthinking individuals here and there quite astray. It became necessary that it should be taken up. The pulpits everywhere accepted the challenge. Men clung to their Bibles, and frankly told their reason for so doing. God gave them the Book. Whether some would think he would or not, he did—and that was the end of debate. There were champions who did such valiant service in those days that a scriptural literature was created, of inestimable value. And in our times, nobody raises that question. But after fifteen years, a new agitation has arisen; and now we have to begin at the beginning, and construct an argument for the existence of an organic official ministry in the church of Christ—a thing which the church never has been without in eighteen centuries of life!

II. We need not lose any time. Let us now, in the second place, move right on into the midst of the subject. What are to be understood as the foundations upon which rests the office of an ordained ministry in the church of the Lord Jesus Christ?

The answer to this question is really so prosaic and commonplace that one may possibly be surprised to

The argument.The original promise.

hear it. Nothing of human wisdom or adroit reasoning is demanded at all. Nothing ingenious or novel can be of even the least service in such an inquiry. The inspired word declares : "For after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." The sovereign will of almighty God himself established an ordained ministry as the one instrumentality by which the gospel might be proclaimed among men. The preacher's office, therefore, is of divine and inalienable right. This it is our duty to assert again and again, whether men will hear or forbear. The young Titus was told that he must duly urge the doctrine : "These things speak, and exhort ; and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee."

There was an original promise made to God's people, and put on the eternal record : "And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding." Has that engagement ever been fulfilled ? Hear the word again : "And he gave some, apostles ; and some, prophets ; and some, evangelists ; and some, pastors and teachers ; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

Let us come away for a moment from simple citation of texts. It happens that this whole matter lies before

Isaiah's vision.Government service.

us in an exquisite picture, Isaiah's vision of the Lord throned in the temple. The majestic form of Jehovah is suddenly withdrawn out of sight, and the kneeling man hears a voice : " Whom shall I send, and who will go for us ? " Surely, we understand that this figurative representation is of our Maker considering what agency will be the fittest for him to make use of in spreading his messages of reconciliation through the whole world. One would shrink from so daring a conception, even in rhetoric, if it were his own ; but here it is in the Bible, and it is singularly picturesque and graphic.

It is generally easy enough to find men who are willing to undertake government service. Not often does an office go a-begging. And the more august and powerful the empire, the likelier it would be to find ready agents. Foreign ministers throng most ante-chambers at the slightest call. Christ's ministers of higher class seem to come reluctantly and offer themselves not often. Really, it appears a little singular to note here that God is represented as inquiring doubtfully after somebody to be a prophet.

This could not have been through any caprice : there is not the least suggestion of trifling in scenes so august and awful. Nor was the question a mere form, as if the king were keeping up a share in the dialogue of a pageant ; Isaiah treats it like a real demand, and answers it at a tremendous risk. Nor does it seem at all likely that it was asked in weakness or irresolution : surely, the Lord of Heaven could choose his ser-

Meaning of the question.Voluntary life-work.

vants at his will. He cannot have inquired in ignorance, either: he knew who was going to offer, and whom he was certain to accept in due time.

There was a deep and wise purpose of grace in such a question. We shall miss the entire point of it if we fail to see that its aim was to draw an affectionate and voluntary proffer of life-service from that subdued man, just forgiven his sins under the atoning touch of the coal from the altar of sacrifice. We expect that very answer which is recorded from the grateful Isaiah: "Here am I; send me." That is to say, the brilliant, picturesque teaching of an inspired spectacle like this is discovered in these two particulars: God deliberately chooses *men* for his special messengers to all the world, and he secures the labor he wishes by inviting a *voluntary* consecration rather than by commanding obedience.

Really, this is the entire argument for a fixed office of ordained ministers in the church of the living God. But is it not conclusive? Is this not the sense of the passage which we are now studying in Paul's epistle to the Corinthians? Let us read it over: "And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ; as though God did beseech you by

“Ambassadors for Christ.”Must be “sent.”

us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.”

It only remains, therefore, to inquire concerning the perpetuation of the office by the churches themselves. A single passage of Scripture is all that is needed to set this matter at rest: “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!”

The cumulative argument in these verses moves on step by step. A broad announcement of the gospel's adaptation and entire sufficiency for all classes and conditions of men is given at the outset: “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” But here the apostle meets several serious difficulties lying in the way. To such he gives much rhetorical force by stating them in the form of a question: “How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?” Prayer is necessary to salvation, and faith is necessary to prayer. So another perplexity confronts him: “How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?” Prayer is necessary to salvation; faith is necessary to prayer; knowledge is necessary to faith. So comes another

The church must provide.What is ordination?

hindrance: "How shall they hear without a preacher?" A man cannot know a new thing unless somebody tells him; and if he does not know about Christ, he cannot believe in him; and then if he does not believe, he cannot pray for help, and so he will eventually be lost. Hence, there starts up this closing question: "How can they preach, except they be sent?" So Paul rounds his argument, clinching it with a text from Isaiah, in which the Old Testament lifts its voice joyously to give full confirmation to the New: "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good; that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!"

The bearing of all this is perfectly clear. The church is bound to raise up, to educate, to commission, to ordain, and to support an official class of preachers, in order that God's plan shall be carried out for all nations and for all times.

But what is ordination? The ceremony of setting apart the ministers whom the Spirit of God invites and impresses into the work is, certainly in a truly Protestant church, exceedingly simple. In significance, it is nothing but our public recognition of what we believe God has done beforehand in choosing the man.

Our authority for the imposition of hands, with which the impressive ceremony is generally attended, is easily traced to the inspired Scriptures. One familiar verse is

Imposition of hands.The present demand.

enough to quote here : the young Timothy, just ordained and sent out to his work, finds among the weighty counsels of the apostle addressed to him one calculated to keep his office before him : "Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery." We do not profess to communicate anything, when we lay our hands upon a candidate's head. It is a mere gesture to show whom we intend to set apart to a professional calling as a preacher. Christ gives him all he has of heavenly grace, not man, nor the church.

It seems clear that there could be no question concerning this general doctrine of the ministry, which is as old as is the church itself, if our decisions were not complicated by some particular presentations of just our times. Evangelists, nowadays, demand that they shall be received and welcomed among the churches *without ordination*. They shall be permitted to preach, and even administer sacraments, independent of all setting apart to a fixed office. This is new. Nettleton, and Kirk, and Finney, were all regularly ordained clergymen. Audiences at large did not find any fault with their "cloth." We have had in our communities several of the best Christian workers the world ever knew—men whom we all alike honor and love—men whom God has wonderfully blessed as evangelists. They peril great interests when they demand that we shall accept them without ordination to the sacred office. They are the ones to make the issue. Some of us are

Lay-preachers."Gospel" mass-meetings.

ready to join the issue with them. We assert that it is not safe or fair or scriptural to argue from their prosperous career that ordination is prejudicial, or that lay-preachers would be better to man our missions.

For we insist that it would be better all around if these noble coadjutors were ordained in the orderly way, as Barnabas and Timothy were in the primitive history when they began to preach.

Nor should we be candid if we did not admit that we go even further. We do not believe that the mass-meeting system is the best for converting souls, and retaining those who are apparently gathered. Some of us distrust this whole plan of promiscuous assemblies in "gospel" services, with laymen giving "Bible-readings," as flinging reproach upon the churches. Is there no gospel anywhere but in them? Is the Bible read anywhere else? Will the man go and hear his wife's pastor once in his own pulpit, before he pronounces upon him in the Hippodrome?

Christ loved the church, and Christ established the church, and Christ gave himself for the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all. When any association undertakes to compete with the church's organization as an instrument for saving, training, educating, and retaining souls of men, a decent word ought to be spoken in warning against putting human wisdom in conflict with that which is inspired and divine.

But are all the churches what they should be? Oh,

The churches fastidious.Halls are free.

no ! no ! Some of our buildings are too fine and costly. Some of our services are too turgid and swollen with fashionable parade : on rare Sundays they are nothing but concerts with programmes. Some of us in the pulpit are dull and dry. Our sermons are scholarly and philosophical. Our machinery all around is too elegantly fitted to the taste of only fastidious people. We have too little sympathy for the poor and the humble. Oh, how pitiful are the confessions many of us are ready conscientiously and sorrowfully to make !

But the remedy is not found in calling the church Laodicean, and declaring that "the Lord has already spewed it out of his mouth." Perhaps, if our brethren will keep their confidence for a little while longer, there can be a change. Let us read over together one verse more, before we part company just now : "For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them : but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it."

Why are some of the churches thinly attended, while the public halls are filled ? Because Christians will generously pay for the rent of halls so as to make them free to everybody, while they decline to let poor people even sit in their church pews when unable to make up the rent. Is it because the gospel is not preached unto us as well as unto them ? Are we all ready to assert that the truth of God is presented in our Christian pulpits less intelligently than it is outside of them ? Less intel-

Is the gospel preached?

Not "mixed with faith."

ligibly? less faithfully? less courageously? less spiritually?

Why does not the word profit, then? The verse says, because it is not "mixed with faith." Whose faith? The faith of "them that *hear* it." People have become used to the emotional excitement of a promiscuous throng singing "pull for the shore," until they say their own public meetings are dull and spiritless. They seem to have no expectation that good can be done in quiet ways in their old lecture-rooms. Some church-members lack faith in all ordinary means of grace. They seem to think nothing can be done by the established methods, or in the home localities. Another kind of sermons, another sort of hymn-books, another form of machinery, must be brought forward. They are not content to rest in quiet working. So the ways of Zion mourn.

Let us have done with recrimination, and divide the sorrow and shame, if such there be, while we begin once more to believe in the profitableness of God's plan. Is it too much to ask that some affectionate and honest words of deprecation may be heard, just for once? Less seeking of novelties, and more *trust* in the means we have, might, perhaps, bring in an increase of good.

VI.

THE CHRISTIAN ARMOR.

PUT ON THE WHOLE ARMOR OF GOD, THAT YE MAY BE ABLE TO STAND AGAINST THE WILES OF THE DEVIL.—*Ephesians 6: 11.*

It might be conjectured that one, who for a long time was accustomed to wear a chain binding his wrist to the wrist of a soldier of the Roman army, and so was kept in the constant companionship and observation of a man in full military dress—it might be conjectured that such an one, when fashioning a formal letter by an amanuensis, would become figurative on occasion, and introduce what he saw into what he wrote. So the peculiar vividness of description, and the particularity of detail, which we meet in the famous passage of Paul's epistle to the Ephesians, would find easy explanation from his imprisonment.

1. It begins with a call to arms—a ringing challenge to soldierly bearing and courageous exploit: “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.”

Religious life is sometimes called “peace in believing.” Christ bids souls to come unto him that they might find “rest.” All this has a welcome and an intelligible meaning. But surely that Christian will make a vast mistake who forces such comforting expressions

A conquered peace.Thomas Campbell.

as these into undue and strange employment. There is nowhere in this world any peace which has not been wrought out in stubborn conflict, which is not now the achievement of valiant service for the truth. The soldiers of the cross do not enlist to go at once into the hospital, or sit around the door of a sutler's tent.

Hence our Lord puts in his well-known and often-quoted warning to all those who start to follow him that they shall intelligently understand, and then deliberately decide, what to do : "What king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace. So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple."

It is to be feared that too much stress is laid upon the emotional and experimental part of piety in this easy day of ours. Too many young princes go off into dangerous Zulu-land for curious inquiry or mere love of adventure. There was (so we are told) once an English poet, who took position in a lofty tower that he might see a real battle. He seems to have had great prosperity, for the world has not yet done praising his versified description of the rushing onset, the tumult, and the carnage, "by Iser rolling rapidly." Now nobody need hope to become acquainted with the solemn realities of life by merely gazing out upon it from a protected bel-

Ignatius Loyola.Zechariah's vision.

fry, as Campbell did on Hohenlinden field. We cannot make a poem out of it. There are awful certainties of exposure, and necessities of attack, which disdain figures and rhythms of mere music. And, moreover, we are combatants, not spectators ; we are in the onset, and the shock is at hand. "There is no discharge in that war."

2. It is best to avoid all confusion at once, and ascertain who are our adversaries ; specially, who leads on the host. Here the apostle speaks clearly, if only people would listen : "Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil."

"Two kingdoms," said Ignatius Loyola, "divide the world ; the kingdom of Immanuel, and the kingdom of Satan." This the whole Bible admits ; but nowhere can there be found even so much as one text which intimates that Christ and the devil are on equal terms. Satan is a created being ; he had a maker, and he now has a ruler. He wages at present only a permitted warfare for a limited season. His onsets are well called "wiles," for he shuns open fields, and deals best in ambuscades and secret plots. "Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light."

Next to that recorded picture in the opening of the Book of Job, perhaps the most graphic which we find in the Scriptures is that of the prophet Zechariah : "And he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. And the Lord said unto Satan, The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan ; even the Lord that hath chosen

A court-martial.Our adversaries.

Jerusalem rebuke thee : is not this a brand plucked out of the fire ? ” Just as in a court-martial, two men appear in order to manage a suit after quick arrest of some derelict subaltern, so here a poor accused being seems to be put on trial. A divine advocate—even Jesus Christ the righteous, the true historic angel of the Lord—labors to defend him ; while another, the accuser of his brethren, is allowed to hinder and interrupt, springing technicalities in the way of progress, wresting the evidence, pleading false issues, suborning witnesses, tampering with testimony, mutilating records, disturbing the tribunal with vociferous objections, until the presiding judge will bear it no longer, but in true commiseration for the culprit bursts out, “ The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan ! ”

It would seem as if the careful apostle had been afraid that his military language might be construed literally ; for he adds a word of warning, lest any one should suppose that the faith which Christ came to establish should be propagated by force of arms : “ For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.” And in another chapter he gives a hint from the opposite direction ; if our foes are spiritual, then our resistance is to be spiritual also : “ The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God, to the pulling down of strongholds ; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself

The devil's angels.A man tempted.

against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

There is awful force in the expression, "the devil and his angels;" for it shows us Satan is not alone in his work. He is the prince fiend of a fiendish clan. I have somewhere seen a picture on which was represented a human soul in its hour of conflict. It was as if the invisible world had for a moment been made visible by the rare skill of the artist. There, around the tried and anxious man, these emissaries of Satan were gathered. Dim, ethereal forms luridly shone out on every side. One might see the tempting offer of a crown over his head; but he would have to examine quite closely before he could discover how each braided bar of gold in the diadem was twined in so as to conceal a lurking fiend in the folds. Then there was just visible a serpent with demoniac eyes coiled in the bottom of the goblet from which he was invited to drink. Foul whispers were plying either ear. There were baleful fires of lust in the glances of those who sought his companionship. A beautiful angel drew nigh; but a skeleton of death could be traced beneath the white robes he had stolen. I cannot say it was a welcome picture; but certainly there was a lesson in it. Among the noisy critics who gaily pronounced on its characteristics, I noticed there was one thoughtful man who turned aside and wept. Perhaps he knew what it meant.

3. Is there no defence against all this? Surely, every

Christian remembers the armor which Paul catalogues in detail: "Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; and above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."

So picturesque is this exhortation that one could almost believe that Paul simply ran his eyes over the military man at his side, and told his amanuensis to spiritualize the articles of his equipment. For every one now knows that this whole list of shield and shoes, girdle and breastplate, helmet and sword, may be, in the old paintings, found upon the person of each soldier in the Roman legions.

Most elderly people will remember the kindling of heroic ardor they had in their early days, when they contemplated Christian in the few illustrations of Pilgrim's Progress as he emerged from the Palace Beautiful. He had been shown into the armory at the beginning of his visit, and seen all the rare weapons of antiquity, from Shamgar's ox-goad to Jael's nail. But when he was to go on his journey again, the three discreet damsels clad him with "all manner of furniture which their Lord had provided for pilgrims."

The fight with Apollyon.

"All-prayer."

Few readers will ever forget how different the brave man looked in the pictures after that. He had struggled up the Hill Difficulty in flowing robes which, to our critical eyes, seemed effeminate. But now he appeared in the road wearing the conspicuous head-piece of a warrior, almost as fierce as Greatheart himself in pursuit of the giants. Down into the Valley of Humiliation he walked courageously for his historic fight with Apollyon.

Concerning this panoply, before we leave John Bunyan, perhaps it may be well to note three points which this prince of dreamers has plainly made. First, he calls us to observe that Christian, in all his splendid accoutrement, had been provided with no armor *for his back*, so that he felt it necessary, when the bellowing fiend drew near, "to venture and stand his ground," since to turn would give him greater advantage to pierce with darts.

Then, in the enumeration of weapons, Bunyan mentions "*all-prayer*" as one which possessed great value and efficiency. For myself, I acknowledge that in my youth I was greatly curious to know what this part of the armor could be. I think I understand more about it now, since I have been in the conflict.

And then, Bunyan shows us that in all the panoply Christian wore, there was only one thing for attack; the rest was for mere defence. The *sword* proved to be the man's reliance; for when Apollyon had him fairly down, it was only with his great two-edged

The sword of the Spirit.The word of God.

sword that he gave the fiend a "deadly thrust" which turned the battle; "then, indeed, he did smile and look upward!"

4. So I judge we may profitably devote a little more study to the description of this weapon—"the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."

It is to be supposed that all true Christians admit the truth of that military maxim—the best defence is a swift attack.

When our Lord was tempted in the wilderness, he did nothing more than just quote Scripture. He pressed Satan so vigorously that he began to quote Scripture too. Three texts of Deuteronomy—a book which skeptics are trying their best nowadays to get rid of—defeated the adversary finally. Jesus might have used any other form of deliverance, but he chose that in order that we who were to come after might know the devil could be certainly defeated with that. "The word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

Apollon was an experienced and adroit swordsman; he was "mighty in the Scriptures." To have a weapon in one's hand that is certain to pierce the scales of Apollyon every thrust, is of itself enough to make every one valiant. Most of us have been told the child's story about a mysterious sword which had in its

The coward's cure.Hewitson's defence.

construction a kind of life of its own. It was put in the hand of a coward in order to work his cure. When he tried to run away, it kept him right up to the front of the battle. Whenever he attempted to fling it from him, it clung to his grasp. Whenever he sought to slink out of sight and hide the bright blade in the folds of his uniform, of itself it would leap from the scabbard, and begin smiting the first foe it could touch. By and by, he learned to put confidence in it; for he perceived he never could be beaten as long as that invincible hilt was in his hand.

Such a weapon is this "sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." It will of itself fight, it will of itself conquer, and in the end it will defend and deliver every brave man who trusts it. "I will fight you," said a hard-fisted man once to the saintly Hewitson. "Very well," replied he quietly, taking his Testament from his pocket; "just wait till I get out my sword."

It seems to me that this is what so interests us in the private Bibles of experienced and old veterans of the cross. Marked and worn, bearing tokens of use, they fall into our hands; how reverently we look upon them! Anybody would touch Whitefield's Bible gently, and turn over its pages with tenderness. Then there is the old family Bible, and our mother's Bible. All these make us think of those days when Scandinavian heroes hung up their historic swords as symbols of prowess among the statues of the demi-gods in the halls of the Walhalla.

Our comrades.True heroism.

Thus have we been passing through this military pageant ; we have heard the call to conflict ; we have recognized the adversary ; we have seen the armor ; we have touched the weapon. There is nothing left to us now but the comradeship ; quietly does the pictured scene vanish ; the words of this beloved apostle, as he closes the stirring passage, are pathetic and calm : "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints : and for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds ; that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak."

No Christian fights the great campaign alone. Around him are many soldiers who lift the same banner, keep the same step in marching, follow the same Leader, bear the same perils, and sing the same song. Paul is not too proud to ask that he may be remembered among the brethren when they pray. He desires to fight the good fight, and keep the faith unto the end. He had written a record of which he did not need to be ashamed. Would they please pray for him now ?

Heroism is to be reckoned according to one's circumstances of exposure and need of endurance. Some of us have been reading a little story, which has given us a grain of comfort. It appears that a poor but worthy artisan of Paris once went to his bishop with his heart almost overwhelmed with fears. "Father," said he,

The troubled inquirer.The two castles.

with the most profound humility, "I am a sinner ; I admit and feel I am a sinner ; but it is against my will. Every hour I ask for light, and humbly pray for faith in my struggle ; but still I am overwhelmed with doubt. Surely, if I were not despised of God, he would not leave me to fight thus with the adversary of souls. Does he see me in the midst of my grief?"

The bishop is reported to have consoled his sorrowing visitor in this way : "You are aware," said he, "that the king of the realm has two castles on which he much relies for the defences of France. That at Montlhéry is far inland, and remains remote out of danger ; but that at La Rochelle is on the coast and is always a conspicuous mark for marauders from the sea, and exposed to sieges ; indeed, it bears the scars of balls from a hundred bombardments already. A commander has to be appointed yearly to each of these famous fortresses. Now tell me, which do you suppose stands eminently the highest in the estimation of the monarch?" And the man answered easily, "That soldier is the bravest who holds his own the most firmly in the place where there is greatest danger."

Then the bishop pronounced his reply well made, only adding : "And our king puts ever his most trusty veterans into the castle of La Rochelle ; any one who could just *live* there could grow to be famous without an effort in the castle of Montlhéry!"

Says George Eliot, "It is only by a wide comparison made among common facts that even the wisest full-

“Well-rolled barrels.”Old soldiers coming home.

grown man can distinguish well-rolled barrels from more supernal thunder.” Our times are crowded with exciting disclosures. We are not certain just at the moment that when the books are opened it will not be found that some of the heroes of this age are simply those who have stood in high positions of temptation, and yet have *not* fallen from integrity. Even much-abused and much-sinning Robert Burns could say :

“What’s done we partly may compute,
But know not what’s resisted.”

How much old soldiers always love each other ! They are the gentlest men always who are the bravest. Cowards only are coarse. What a pageant that will be to see when the gates are lifted up, and the King of Glory shall enter heaven, leading in the hosts of those who have put on, and worn in fidelity, “the whole armor of God !”

VII.

THE MIND OF CHRIST.

LET THIS MIND BE IN YOU, WHICH WAS ALSO IN CHRIST JESUS.—

Philippians 2: 5.

“THE grand natural feature of our northern life,” says a popular Swedish writer, “is a conquered winter.”

There can be no doubt that the extreme temperatures of those almost arctic regions need warm hearts and inventive minds to render them endurable. The fierce blasts chill the blood ; vivacity and good cheer must be had in order to make its currents flow again. And so, as the tourists tell us, you will find, while you journey through Norway or Sweden, as well as Northern Denmark, the hospitable lights gleaming in low windows with a new friendliness of welcome, the great fires roaring in the capacious chimneys, and simple-hearted neighbors coming every evening to cluster at each other's board. There are innocent entertainments for the elders, intricate puzzle-games for the children, and for the youths and maidens (telling the never-old story) brave legends and sweet songs.

Thus the iciness of those Scandinavian climates melts in the glow of charity and kindly offices of considerate regard. The secret of the genial villagers' success lies in the fact that they not only subdue the winter, but also

"A conquered winter."The new life.

ingeniously reproduce some sort of organization—like summer—in its place.

See here a symbol of the task which a living Christianity has set for itself to accomplish. It is no more nor less than a positive triumph over the unregenerate winter in the hearts of men at large. The gospel proposes to introduce into all the torpor now reigning in sinful humanity a vital cheer and charm, which shall kindle it to attractiveness, and bring back to it a semblance, at least, of the summer day of its purity and peace. We cannot banish winter, but we can conquer it.

Not, however, by just one frantic effort, but by some constituted plan of long continuance and wide reach. Religion aims, therefore, to check malevolence and all vice, harmonize discord, eradicate error, enlighten ignorance, relieve innocent poverty, banish needless pain, and hush the whirlwinds of tempestuous strife. But that is not all, by any means. It is not enough, by any means. Something positive must be furnished in the place of that which it dethrones. The soul of a man cannot live upon a nothing. If everything is to be relinquished for piety, then piety must be something more than a mere routine of regulations ; it must be something better than a mere code of restraints ; it must say "Thou mayest," as well as "Thou shalt not."

Hence the gospel further proposes to institute a new structure of human life altogether. It gathers up the reinless, restless faculties of the soul, and seeks to combine them as energizing factors of an entirely fresh ex-

Things which remain.The church in Philippi.

istence. So it makes as much as it can out of what it has. It strengthens "the things which remain." It tries to cultivate all the graceful amenities of a better social arrangement, turning men to help each other, and love each other; cleansing the affections, and cementing together the sympathies of all those who own the common brotherhood; and associating such as look up to God as the one good Father in a permanent and joyous relationship of trust.

The epistle to the Philippians is addressed to Christians. No one can read its affectionate chapters without becoming impressed with the thought that Paul is now reconstructing a subdued city. Ten years of vigorous life had passed since this apostle first preached the gospel in this Macedonian colony, and brought in his first convert in Europe—an Asiatic woman, singularly enough—whose heart the Lord opened in a female prayer-meeting. The church had prospered, was now large and powerful. But the leaders were at variance, and some of the women had got into trouble.

Kindly as the apostle writes, it is evident to us all that he was vexed and anxious, as he saw how foolishly they were pulling each other to pieces. From several expressions, which he employs in the closing chapter, we infer that the principal workers were in a cross, conceited, and punctilious humor. They disagreed as to ordinary methods of management. They strove for preëminence in position. Certain headstrong and obstinate members raised a wild debate in the church. Two women

Two women differ.Divided leadership.

—Euodias, “well-favored,” and Syntyche, “happy-fortuned,” so by their very names showing they might have been about better business—took sides and went into opposition.

It was just the same old story, again and again repeated wherever there are strong people put into the same field. It seems inevitable that poor human natures should differ, provided they have for partisans those who love solitary opinions, and propose to force them even against hints of good fellowship.

Unhappy creatures are all such as cannot bear to find others have more of a following than they themselves can present. And more unhappy still are the patient multitudes of praying people, who are willing to follow anybody, if only he will keep the peace and go ahead, but who find themselves sorely fretted by jealousies, and embarrassed by cliques, which they neither appreciate nor understand.

In undertaking to pacify these excited people in Philippi, Paul throws himself back upon those old histories which had attached them to him in days gone by. He is not ashamed to plead with them for the sake of the love they bore him personally: “If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.”

The grounds on which he bases his appeal for a hearing are awfully solemn. He summons them to listen

by the joys of spiritual repose in the Saviour ; by the tender impressiveness of his example ; by the experience of charity Christians feel when they love each other ; by the hopeful communion they cherish in the Holy Ghost ; and by the affectionate sensibilities which they give to the lonely and ruined world around them. No one can fail to notice the exceedingly lowly and affectionate manner which this great and good man adopts in approaching these insurrectionary people. Most men would have lost head under such reverent obedience as that church at Philippi was accustomed to give Paul. He might have ordered them ; but he now entreats. He had an undoubted chance to command ; but he only implores.

The end he aims at is perfectly plain. Of one thing, with all his vast experience, he now must have grown perfectly certain—no church, no family, no organization for Christian work and edification, could prosper, unless the members were absolutely united in spirit, in temper, and in plans. These words, “that ye be like-minded,” may be rendered literally, “thinking the self-same thing.” The unity of purpose he contemplates must be unbroken, like the harmony of instruments in a band of music ; like the step of a trained platoon of soldiers, rhythmic and regular ; like the orderly pull of singing sailors when they weigh the anchor at sea.

Now most of us know some ministers who preach, and some merchants who give benefactions, and some teachers who instruct classes, and some book-makers

Lowliness of mind.Church of Scotland.

who write, and some artists who sing, and some flimsy fops who dress, for merest display of talent, figure, cultivation, and supposable graces. Against this the candid apostle proceeds directly: "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves." The noun here translated "vainglory" occurs nowhere else in the Scriptures. It is devoutly to be wished that the spirit censured in it had never been known outside of that little colony in Macedonia to which the rebuke was first sent.

In 1651, the Assembly of the Church of Scotland drew up an extensive enumeration of sins, most remarkable for its startling annunciation of blame and for its searching detection of the particulars on which it rested. Among the statements are found the crying wrongs, in that day, of people and clergy alike. This, for a prominent example: "We acknowledge that, in our prayers for the divine assistance, we pray more for aid to the messenger than we do for aid to the message we bring; not caring what becomes eventually of the word, if only we be, with some measure of assistance, carried on with the duty." Then this, for another item of ordinary wrong: "We acknowledge that we preach Christ, not so much that the people may know him, but that they may think we know much of him ourselves."

Now it cannot be expected that such candor as this will find its way often into public confession. Pride and vainglory are often unconsciously cherished. It is an

Old apothegm.Self-deception.

ancient classical apothegm : "A serpent is never seen at its full length until it is dying." No one will ever know how obstinate a thing in the Christian breast this proud temper is, unless with courageous purpose he attacks it, with full intention to kill.

The commonplaces of duty, the simplicities of doctrine, the first beginnings of experience—these are what are hardest to instill into the minds of most self-seeking believers. There are some in this world so thoroughly mistaken in their estimate of themselves that they cannot see the scales by which their eyes are blinded. They display their enormous conceit in no other way so plainly as by asserting they are absolutely destitute of the vice of vanity. They flatter themselves by saying they have so much dignity that they cannot be flattered. They assert they have no bad temper; and then flash into perilous wrath at the amazing impudence of the man who doubted it. They will for years watch sullenly to take vengeance upon the unwary friend who tendered an unwelcome admonition against their being revengeful—a disposition they always denied. There are some persons whose very eyes shine with pride just because they have settled that now they have reached the extreme virtue of humility. Hence wisely said the old philosopher Seneca : "Flatteries, even when they have been most deprecated, please."

The remedy, which the apostle here recommends, is direct : "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." This is what

physicians call "heroic treatment." Paul says each man is to consider others not only equal to himself, but better. The cure of conceit, therefore, would be found in just putting our neighbor forward in the exact place we ourselves covet. "All great things are simple : " so once said a great statesman, himself as simple as he was great. This bold apostle deliberately proposes that those quarrelsome and ambitious people in Philippi settle their discords by giving up quietly to each other !

In the Westminster Assembly, it is said the members kept little books, wherein they noted arguments to be answered, or heads of speeches to be made. In that renowned body there was one man of whom heretofore the literary and theologic world had heard little. So modest and retiring was he that almost nothing was expected of him. Yet now and then he startled those erudite sages and eloquent doctors with an address so marvelous in power and adroit in ingenuity, as well as convincing in logic, that contemporaneous history rang with his praise. Some grew jealous, and small spite began to throw detractions. They said he had gathered his helps from outside sources, and filled his memorandum with thoughts from other brains ; in that must be the secret of his matchless success. By and by the long sessions broke up, and he was asked for a sight of the note-books he had carried. They opened every well-worn volume. Instead of arguments and reasons and illustrations, they found only such expressions as these : " O Lord, vouchsafe us light this day ! " " O divine Master, give us

Gillespie's prayers.Our blessed Master.

thine assistance !" "O Lord, glorify thyself through us thy servants !" "Christ, defend against all enemies thine own cause !"

And that was all. His power lay not in his intellect, but in his prayers. His wish was like that of the sainted Brainerd : "Oh, let me and mine be nothing, only that thine own kingdom may come !"

Higher than this it does not seem possible for even an inspired preacher to go. But Paul does go one step higher. He grows more and more earnest as he continues to exhort his dear friends in Philippi, more and more fervid with each reiteration of his words of counsel. And now at last, as if he well understood the inveteracy of their besetting sin, he suddenly makes a new appeal of tremendous power, grounding the stress of it upon the very essence of their piety, springing out before them the example of their Master himself, and challenging their instant admiration and imitation : "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus : who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God ; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men : and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name : that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth ; and that every tongue

Christ's exaltation.An orator's expedient.

should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

The reach of this exhortation transcends all analysis. We should lose the vast force of it by picking it to pieces for details of doctrine. Be like Christ: he was God; he became man; could any one ever have been more worthily exalted? could any one ever have been more deeply humiliated? so he received his recompense of reward.

Just as some orator, skilfully addressing a company of soldiers on the eve of battle, begins with an admonition and ends with a picture; just as he would appeal to their manhood, their consistency, their honor, and their courage, as he would play upon their fear of disgrace and their contempt of poltroonry; just as he would follow up each motive with another and a more elevated one, until, at the last, he would invoke their patriotism and their love for their leader, alike and together, by unfurling the national ensign and showing them how he had caused to be painted across the folds the likeness of the face they knew; so here the apostle seeks to arouse Christian enthusiasm by quickly exhibiting the very image of the Captain of our salvation, and bidding us follow him alone.

Not without a word of comforting encouragement, however. Can any one be like Christ? Can every one be like Christ? Paul says it will be harder for some of us than for others. Some will fear, and some will tremble; but all can work, and God is overhead: "Where-

Can all be like Christ?God gives help.

fore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling ; for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

Surely, if one desires the "mind of Christ," he must see that he will be very far from securing it, if he exercises his own mind in showing how unlike him other people are. "Boasting is excluded." I do not know a more pathetic spectacle in the New Testament than that of the two blind men at the gate of Jericho—rivals in business, recollect—making (as it were) common cause against the uncharitable multitude, and in the same sentence of speech crying for mercy from the Son of David. Matthew Henry's comment on the passage is very bright. "These joint sufferers," says he, "were joint suitors. Being companions in the same tribulation, they were partners in the same supplication."

In every honest effort, God gives mysterious help. What is wanted on our part is decision winged with devotion. Our wills surrender ; just there, God wills for us.

"He who hath felt the Spirit of the Highest,
Cannot confound, or doubt him, or defy ;
Yea, with one voice, O world, though thou deniest,
Stand thou on that side—for on this am I !"

VIII.

PIETY TESTED AT HOME.

AND WHATSOEVER YE DO, DO IT HEARTILY, AS TO THE LORD, AND
NOT UNTO MEN.—*Colossians 3: 23.*

JUST now my eye caught glimpse of a bit of pleasantry in a daily newspaper, which, after all, had a meaning in it. It seems that a stranger was invited to preach for what we call "a colored church." He inquired what subject he should choose for a sermon. One of the dusky deacons replied, "Oh! whatever you will, of course; but I think you would do better not to try the Ten Commandments; for I always notice that when anybody takes his text there, it has a dampening influence upon the congregation."

But in the same journal, not a dozen columns away from this, I noticed again that one of the "colored" pastors in New York, while commenting upon the crime and conviction of a murderer, who was a member of the church, and measurably forward in revivals, gave this surprising inconsistency as an illustration of the disaster resulting from the divorce of morality and religion. This was in dead earnest. It recalled to me the times before the war, when some seemed to accept a sort of unctuousness and emotionalism in the African race for devout piety, and consider that a slave could be

Religion up in the air.Rules too rigid.

a Christian, while yet his life was vicious with pilfering and lies.

Evidently color and race have nothing to do with such a discussion. The religion which is not moral has no pattern for it in the New Testament for anybody. It is most significant to notice that the third chapter of Colossians, which opens with one of the most glowing of all Paul's spiritual appeals, runs at the end into one of the most commonplace of his direct counsels. It begins with saints in heaven, and finishes with servants at home.

That is to say, the apostle, seeking to impress upon the minds of those to whom he is writing the reality of vital godliness, gives them to understand that it is no mere mystical experience kept up in the serene air of resurrection heights, but a true life here below, covering earthly relationships and prosaic duties.

No one can fail to be struck with the sprightly cheerfulness with which this familiar paragraph opens. Paul would have us know that religion beautifies everything it touches. Moralities give a certain sort of additional adornment to the celestial life in the soul, just as the honest strength of moss-covered rocks gives a finer setting to the foam of a waterfall, as it flashes white in the sunshine.

The reproach which a ribald world keeps leveling at the church is that all human hope and joy, all exuberance of a contented and happy heart, are heavily repressed by rigid rules of behavior; men are thundered

Swiss clocks.Work does the singing.

at by the "thou shalt nots" of the Decalogue, and (all fun one side) it does have a "dampening effect" upon everybody to walk along on the verge of the tomb moaning over melancholy prayers.

The picture here offered furnishes an exquisite reply to sneers like this. We have all seen those cunning clocks from Switzerland, hung on work-room walls, so contrived that, as they tell the hours patiently off with hands accurately running across the dial, they shall also with each regular stroke of the bell instantly burst into some lively little tune, and play through the succeeding minutes until sober ticking of real work should be needed again. And then it would be found that no valuable force had been wasted. Not a second had been lost, in the time of the day, for all the sweet recreation of the music. The whole room seemed brighter and happier for the sudden strain which came forth from the mechanism. Yet it was the same weights that moved the pendulum which also swept the unseen fingers over the hidden wires; it was just work, with its solemn purpose unchanged, which did the singing.

Some Christians can keep this up exactly for a long lifetime of love and labor. These will understand precisely what Paul means here: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." "The devil," said Martin Luther once, "is afraid of good singing!"

The family organization.Jewish legend.

1. Perhaps it is well to notice here, as the first suggestion of all, how prominently the apostle brings the family organization into observation. This whole passage might be introduced as a comment upon the expression he so often employs in his epistles, when he sends greetings to his familiar friends, and mentions explicitly "the church that is in thy house."

The family, as a divine institution, is designed to play organically into the church. It is the primary church, the nursery of the gospel. And this is what gives to it its supreme beauty and strength. If heaven is anywhere, as we sometimes sing, "begun below," it is under the household roof. There are three words found in the English language, found in no other now spoken among men—*wife*, *comfort*, and *home*.

The Jews have an old legend that when Adam and his bride were driven out of Paradise, Eve put forth her hand, and, unseen, plucked a single flower, which she hid in the folds of her leaf-garment. What the flower was, no one has ever pretended to say. If it were the notion of the family organization, then surely this was a celestial plant well saved for an earthly soil.

2. Now, next to this, we may note that the apostle gives full authorization to government as a bond of control and dependence in the family. For he proceeds directly to recognize husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants, as members of each well-constituted household. Duties are announced as belonging to each of these relations.

Was Paul married ?Christian homes.

One of the incidental proofs of the inspiration we are accustomed to credit to this remarkable man, is found in the consummate tact and delicacy which in every instance characterize his words when he speaks of the home relation. It is yet a mooted question whether Paul was a married man, or ever had a family of his own. But he certainly knew a language which most of us can understand ; a great human common sense makes his words wise and profitable. Of John Milton the great Dr. Johnson once said, " He was a genius that could cut a Colossus from a rock, but he could not carve heads upon cherry-stones." This chapter gives us evidence that Paul was quite equal to the themes with which he was divinely entrusted, both the little and the large. One rule he gave in the outset, covering every conceivable exigency : " And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him."

The application of such a rule as that to all the authorities and subordinations of a Christian family, would remove from them their violence and their peril in every particular. There would be consideration for the young and reverence for the old. There would be obedience and fidelity, confidence and recollection of need.

Think of a room—what we used to call the "living-room" when we were young. Stand (in imagination) at the door of it now. See what the artists denominate an "interior." Nobody is within at the moment ; we are alone, pausing on the quiet threshold. Not a sign of

The "living-room."Eli's curse.

life is there save the mere bird that lit from the lilac on the window-sill an instant ago. Yet how full of real beautiful life the room is! Everything we love and look for is right before us.

Otherwise it would not be a *living* room. There in one corner stands grandfather's table with the Bible and his spectacles upon it. In the other corner stands a rocking-horse, and down beside it lies a tin rattle on the floor. Mother's basket—see the emery-balls like big strawberries! Father's writing-desk against the wall—see the sealing-wax he sometimes lends us to head pins with!

One of the particulars of Eli's curse was that there should be no old man in his house. And the reason given for this was that he had not earlier governed his children. How could any fitly-organized family get along without us all together—old and young—sister and brother—the baby, and (you could tell me her name if I asked you) dear old faithful nurse—all belonging there, and welcome forever! And now let that home be Christian, and on this earth there is nothing better to see.

Travelers approach Venice often in the evening; and, just as they enter, there quite possibly floats outside the barriers a tranquil gondola laden with dear companions, who sing as they drift in the moonlight. The bright garments are yellow with the fruits that lie in their laps, and the flowers droop from the children's hair. And with the sweet faces, the gay sally, and the

gentle song—oh, it does seem to the fatigued tourist, speeding on in the cars, as if an actual portion of itself had escaped from the beautiful City of the Sea, and had unconsciously glided forth beyond the walls that it might gladden the shadows of the solemn lagoon with its joy!

Fit symbol is this, to say the least, by which to speak of a household ruled by Christ, and loving him as Lord over all. It seems so like heaven, in spirit of joy and love, that one might be pardoned for imagining it must be a part of it.

3. Add now to this a third thought, which the apostle is very careful to put in, for he knows it is needed just here. A distinct limit has been fixed in the family organization for the indulgence and exercise of authority. It is curious to observe how exactly each relationship in the household is brought up against that which is its legitimate offset, so that there should be no injustice wrought. Thus he runs through all the subordinations; "beginning," as said old Dr. Wisner, "with the tenderest, and ending with the toughest."

The husband is the head of the family, and must be the final governor of its realm. Hence says Paul: "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord." But now there is danger. Irresponsible authority is exceedingly perilous to the possessor. Hence continues Paul: "Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them." The rule to be maintained must be tempered with affection. Out of

“Children, obey.”

“Fathers, provoke not.”

that, consideration will come. Something is said somewhere about the wife being the “weaker vessel.” If so, more care and delicacy will be needed in the management to keep the “bitter” out.

Then comes another relationship, taken up with its balance also: “Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord.” Most of us know what that means, and first and last have had it explained to us. But do we dwell as much on this: “Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.” I distinctly remember that, as a child, I thought this one of the wisest texts in the Bible, and used to get a good deal of comfort out of it in seasons of home depression.

A child has the keenest sort of sense of injustice. Generally a decent boy means well, if we can only get at what he means. He wants a chance to explain. More real wrong has been done to after life than in any other way, by hasty and impetuous demands for unquestioning silence, when a child has only been trying to make his righteousness appear. The saddest of all my human experiences, I do here soberly assert, have been when I was unable to secure a fair showing, and got “discouraged.”

There is something positively beautiful in the ingenuity with which the apostle leads up the self-respect of servants in a Christian household with the thought that God knows, recognizes, and will reward, fidelity to their earthly masters, even in the extreme of obedience: “Ser-

Self-respect kept up.We serve Christ.

vants, obey in all things your masters, according to the flesh ; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers ; but in singleness of heart, fearing God : and whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men." This counsel, as before, Paul offsets with a warning ; but he intimates it, in this instance, with great courtesy, rather than states it outright. He tells the servants that there is a life beyond this, and a Master overhead by whom all people are one time to be fairly judged : "Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance ; for ye serve the Lord Christ. But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done : and there is no respect of persons."

The social and domestic station of a servant, here in our republican land, is not so firmly fixed or clearly outlined as it is in the more aristocratic countries of the Old World. But there is enough in it even with us to try character seriously, and give chance for the exhibition of true Christian grace. The apostle, in the passage we are studying, does not go sufficiently into details to cross the minor relationships, or attempt to outline the duties they owe to each other. For example, how ought servants to behave toward children, and what consideration do children owe to those who wait on them ?

Does not the observation of most men and women bear me out in remarking here that the worst afflictions honest and painstaking dependents—nurses and governesses and waiters, and all that—have to endure, come from children ? The sights in the parks on Saturday af-

Little King Pepins.Garments in sunshine.

ternoons are simply exasperating. The tyranny of boys over the servants sent to watch them is awful. They are nothing more than pigmy despots—little violent King Pepins—with a sceptre like a steel whip. I have seen girls dressed in highest gentility of garments, whose language and demeanor would have been a shame to a fish-market, as they disputed with a small maid, who was trying to do her best as she had been told, and threatened her with lying reports they would take home, unless she yielded to some bold demand.

The one thought which lies upon my mind now, after studying all these verses so patiently, is this : How much of reality there is in the Bible, how much of deplorable sham there is outside of it !

What sort of religion is it that genuine men and women need ? Let them choose it as they do their clothes. It is a shopkeeper's trick to exhibit fabrics for garments in an unnatural glare or a fictitious gloom. Better to look on them in the honest, temperate sunshine of every-day experience, where they are to be worn. And so of our piety. How wholesome it is to let an apostle lead us into the bosom of our families for test !

Fidelity in small things—in ordinary relationships—this is what meets God's approval, and will receive divine reward. At the last—at the last—it will be seen that not the vast things always, but the patient and the true, have been the greatest. "He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much ; and he that is unjust in the least, is unjust also in much."

Samson's last feat.Gentle manliness.

“Manoah's son, in his blind rage malign,
Tumbling the temple down upon his foes,
Did no such feat as yonder delicate vine
That day by day untired holds up a rose.”

Even out-of-door business is not so effectual in its exhibition of real religious character as this quiet life in the home circle. Many a man is noted among his companions on the street as an amiable and gentle-hearted comrade, who is excessively cross and overbearing under the cover of his own roof. He passes for a generous fellow full of courtesy, while his wife mourns because of his chillness, and his children grow tremulous when his step is heard in the hall. Small tyrannies and selfish neglects, petty indulgence of fretted passion, and sullen bursts of temper, cannot be atoned for by talks in the public conference or gifts on the plate.

IX.

THE COMING OF THE LORD.

FOR THIS WE SAY UNTO YOU BY THE WORD OF THE LORD, THAT WE WHICH ARE ALIVE AND REMAIN UNTO THE COMING OF THE LORD SHALL NOT PREVENT THEM WHICH ARE ASLEEP.—I *Thessalonians* 4 : 15.

It is not necessary that everybody should be alarmed, the moment one mentions the matter of our Lord's second coming on the earth. A very absurd sensitivity is manifested, lest what are called "pre-millennial views" should find welcome in the churches. Surely, quiet exposition of Scripture ought always to be in order. Only lately has over-violent suspicion been started. Certain aspects of New Testament truth have hitherto found favor among the most considerate of people.

1. For example, we are all agreed that Jesus Christ is coming again some time. Only some say that he will come at the general judgment, and others say he is coming before.

Years on years we have been singing harmlessly to old "Duke Street" the verse :

"Religion bears our spirits up,
While we expect that blessed hope—
The bright appearance of the Lord:
And faith stands leaning on his word."

Now, this is nothing more nor less than a metrical rendering which Isaac Watts has given us of the passage in Titus: "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." And when strife runs so high in discussion, it seems exceedingly apt to quote the counsel: "Let your moderation be known to all men: the Lord is at hand."

2. Then, again, we are all agreed that the dead will be raised to life when the Lord Jesus comes. In a notable series of verses, addressed to the church in Thessalonica, the apostle Paul takes pains to meet a manifest anxiety on this head. "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him."

There is great significance in this; for we must remember that the first epistle to the Thessalonians is the oldest thing in the New Testament. Evidently, the earliest matter of discussion among the immediate followers of the risen Redeemer was concerning the state and future faring of the pious dead. Why not study up all we can know upon this subject? Paul says he would not have those people ignorant.

Who was "666?"The ancient dead.

It is folly and wilfulness to insist that all disquisitions in this direction end in extravagance. When one is simply invited to notice that all the Scripture writers appear to look upon the Saviour's advent as very near, even in their time, it does not seem either fair or relevant to begin laughing at those who have spent their time trying to find out what "man" six hundred and sixty-six was the "number" of. Prophecy is a different thing from eschatology.

3. In the third place, we are all alike interested in the inquiry whether those believers who are still living, at the moment when Jesus Christ appears, will have any advantage over such as shall have died previous to that moment; and these verses make it all clear.

There had been certain announcements made concerning the advent, which filled the minds of the early Christians and arrested their imaginations. They grew enthusiastic as they reproduced the pictures of glorious prediction, when the King of the kingdom of heaven should descend and claim his own. Those who had been laid away in the tomb might almost be pitied, for they were in danger of being deprived of the privilege of hurrying to the Monarch's triumphal advance. Poor human weakness could not understand how the scattered dust could be collected rapidly enough, and how the hurry of events could escape falling into confusion for the ancient saints. It did seem to some affectionate hearts that there was peril for those who had died without the sight long ago. "These all died in faith, not

Death a sleep.All alive together.

having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." Such might even be overlooked, perhaps they were already forgotten in their silence, possibly they would be belated in the sublime confusions of that day of the Lord. Now was this just fair?

The apostle, having first asserted in their hearing that to be *dead* only meant to be *asleep* in Jesus—nobody was lost, nobody had slipped out of sight or remembrance, but every one was coming when Jesus himself should come—now answers the eager question about the multitudes of such as would not have died. It is worth noticing how solemnly and authoritatively he introduces his asseveration ; he pledges the entire weight of his inspiration in it : "For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God : and the dead in Christ shall rise first."

We all understand that the old English word *prevent* means *come before*, or *anticipate*. Paul asserts that there would be no difference in advantage between the living and the dead. For the dead would be raised before the advent in sufficient season to come with Jesus, and share equally with all the faithful of God. Character should fix destiny. "The Son of man shall come in

the glory of his Father with his angels: and then he shall reward every man according to his works."

4. Then, again, we are all agreed that the great glory of the future state will be found in the personal companionship of the Lord Jesus Christ somewhere. "Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

I do not know any class of expositors who believe that saints are to remain, or that Christ is to have his permanent residence, "in the air." Dr. Candlish, in his commentary on the Book of Genesis, and Dr. Chalmers, in his sermon on the New Heavens and the New Earth, seem to have thought that this world of ours was going to be purified and then made the home of the redeemed, as it once was the home of our holy race before the fall. Many theologians believe that heaven is a distinct place of abode now, and will be tenanted by all the good and pure in heart, when they shall see God. There are wide differences here.

But most Christians are quite under profound conviction that, as the chief pain and penalty for the wicked is that they shall "be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord," so the chief rejoicing and glory for the justified will be found in the sharing of that "presence" through eternity. As Samuel Rutherford used to say, "The Lamb is all the glory of Immanuel's land."

Christian biography would make very evident the

Heavenly anticipation.Mr. Standfast.

fact that the best men and women the world has ever known have, as they grew in grace, grown more and more in the eagerness of the anticipation with which they have longed for the presence of Jesus the Saviour. To them heaven might have been defined as the place where Christ is. Its supreme joy would be found in the disclosure of his companionship. The weary will have rest, the harassed will receive peace, the sad will be comforted, the parted and the pure will meet again. All this is full of glad welcome. But the main anticipation of spiritual believers in looking to the end of their journey, centres upon the person of the divine Redeemer.

“When Mr. Standfast had thus set things in order, and the time being come for him to haste him away, he also went down to the river. Now there was a great calm at that time in the river ; wherefore Mr. Standfast, when he was about half way in, stood awhile, and talked to his companions that had waited upon him thither. And he said : ‘ This river has been a terror to many ; yea, the thoughts of it also have often frightened me ; but now methinks I stand easy ; my foot is fixed upon that on which the feet of the priests that bare the ark of the covenant stood while Israel went over Jordan. The waters are indeed to the palate bitter, and to the stomach cold ; yet the thoughts of what I am going to, and of the convoy that await me on the other side, lie as a glowing coal at my heart. I see myself now at the end of my journey ; my toilsome days are ended. I am

The great comfort.Friends gone before.

going to see that head which was crowned with thorns, and that face which was spit upon for me. I have formerly lived by hearsay and faith ; but now I go where I shall live by sight, and shall be with him in whose company I delight myself. I have loved to hear my Lord spoken of ; and wherever I have seen the print of his shoe in the earth, there I have coveted to set my foot too. His name has been to me a civet-box ; yea, sweeter than all perfumes. His voice has been to me most sweet : and his countenance I have more desired than they that have most desired the light of the sun. His words I did use to gather for my food, and for antidotes against my faintings. He has held me, and hath kept me from mine iniquities ; yea, my steps have been strengthened in his way.' ”

So much, then, for the analysis of this most wonderful passage. The apostle certainly prized the power of the great thoughts he was uttering ; for he instantly presses the exhortation that they be put to use among those to whom he was writing : “ Wherefore comfort one another with these words.”

1. There is comfort in the picture thus offered us, for those who have been bereaved. Our friends are only asleep ; they are not lost ; they are with Christ now ; they will come back to the earth when Jesus comes ; no matter how long ago, no matter where, they died ; and they will be forever with him wherever he is. And we shall be with them in the same blessed companionship, shall know them and dwell with them.

Some will not die.Triumph in coming.

2. There is comfort in the suggestion that perhaps we shall not have to die after all. Some Christians are going to be alive at the moment when Jesus shall appear in the air. Nobody loves death ; it is the awful curse of the race, the sting of all our experiences. Nobody can think of the grave without shuddering ; it seems dark and chill. How fine it would be to escape all that ! How glorious to believe it may be possible that the Lord's coming is so near at hand now that even the pale invalid we are watching will not be compelled to have a funeral or wear a shroud !

3. There is comfort in knowing that when the Lord Jesus comes, it will be not as a crucified Nazarene, but as the Son of God. He will have a glorious retinue, and will be known as the King. All over this world, now for eighteen hundred years, millions of devout men and brave-hearted women, together with as many more trustful little children, have been praying, every morning and night, "Thy kingdom come." That prayer will be heard by and by, when the good time arrives. And whoever is on the Lord's side that day will be glad to meet him in the splendor of his advent. He will not be put off with a reed sceptre then ; he will not wear robes of mockery. The Lamb of God will then be the Lion of Judah !

4. There is comfort in holding communion even here and now, once in a while, with a Redeemer out of sight. Under the ancient dispensation, the high-priest wore golden bells upon his garment. While he was inside of

The golden bells.

"Watching quietly."

the tabernacle curtains, the small, sweet sound of their ringing could be heard by the faithful people. Christ, the high-priest of our profession, is just for a while out of our reach, within the veil of the sanctuary above; a chastened imagination can almost hear him making ready to come forth to us. We must "endure, as seeing him who is invisible." And every joy we have is a foretaste and an evidence of the fulness of joy hereinafter to be revealed.

5. There is comfort in the recollection that time hurries. "Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed." Is it possible, then, any truly Christian heart can be alarmed in prospect of Christ's coming? What is there that one could wish more devoutly? What sort of wife must she be, whose husband is suddenly announced as returning from long absence over the sea, if she changes color and seems abashed? The church is the Lamb's bride; ought she not to make herself ready joyously? If her life be pure, and her heart loyal, will she not hail the signs of the advent?

"So I am watching quietly

Every day;

Whenever the sun shines brightly,

I rise and say:

'Surely it is the shining of his face!'

And look upon the gates of his high place

Beyond the sea;

For I know he is coming shortly

To summon me.

"A few more shadows."Simon Peter's hope.

And when a shadow falls across the window
Of my room,
Where I am working my appointed task,
I lift my head to watch the door and ask
If he is come ;
And then the angel answers sweetly
In my home :
'Only a few more shadows,
And he will come.' "

6. There is comfort in the thought that every real grace we attain will give our Lord pleasure when he comes. This is the one thing in all the dazzling, deceitful world around us which counts as an acquisition. Wealth goes for nothing ; position in society goes for nothing. But faith and hope and meekness and charity are what he loves, and what he will welcome when he sees us face to face. How sweet and calm are the words of the fisherman, Simon Peter, writing in his old age to tried and troubled believers of all time. Mark the expressions, "looking for and hasting unto."

"But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night ; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the ele-

The great day.Tamil saying.

ments shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless."

7. Finally, there is comfort in knowing that fidelity is all that the Lord Jesus demands at our hands till he comes. "For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. Watch ye therefore; for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning."

It is a Tamil saying, that the cocoanut grove will not flourish, which does not hear the footsteps of the owner in it, every day. It would seem as if our Lord Jesus Christ had designedly chosen that all religious life should be made up of many little duties and brief experiences, so that each believer should come the oftener to him for grace. He desires a visit frequently. What he claims of us here is plain busy working in our vocation. No summons has he issued that we forsake home or daily toil. Only this: we are to keep looking for him, and showing the Lord's death "till he come."

When the men searched for Sir John Franklin in the arctic seas, they came upon a little boat out among the icy solitudes. Close by the bleached skeletons lay

The arctic boat."Till he come."

clothing and utensils with names engraved ; and there were also Testaments and books of prayer, marked and underlined. Two double-barreled guns—loaded and ready—resting over the boat's side, pointed upward, standing where they were placed twelve years before. These all now lie in England's proudest museum. And there is no allegory on record among the ages, like that which those mute memorials speak. Think of the solemn picture !

Out in the unknown polar ocean—danger on every hand—no hope, and death coming surely ; yet there amid the promises of God's word, and the home-petitions of devotion, those brave men sat and suffered, keeping their eyes open toward any possible help, and their muskets prepared to answer even the slightest signal from among the cliffs of ice. So they must have lingered on, courageous unto death. Be that our pattern in the agitated life we live ; faithful under the severest strain of trial, patient to await its issue ; and always on the alert for signs of the Lord's coming. "Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching !"

X.

THE CHRISTIAN IN THE WORLD.

BUT GODLINESS WITH CONTENTMENT IS GREAT GAIN. FOR WE BROUGHT NOTHING INTO THIS WORLD, AND IT IS CERTAIN WE CAN CARRY NOTHING OUT.—I *Timothy* 6: 6, 7.

THE freshest of fishes are sometimes caught in the saltiest of seas. It is quite possible for even a truly regenerate man to live in the world, and yet never so much as be tainted by its spirit. He may even vex his righteous soul with the iniquity he meets. But if at the end of some lengthened years he has no more to show for his piety than Lot had when he forsook Sodom, we should be at liberty to draw the conclusion that his religion was of a tame sort and well broken in, so as to have been easily held in hand.

In the midst of those unusually trying circumstances which surrounded the apostle Paul, just after his first imprisonment and just before his last, that ended in martyrdom, he seems finally to have despaired of ever seeing again his young friend Timothy, as he had hoped. So he writes him a letter, in which he constructs a fair future for him. He leaves parting counsels to him, full of wisdom and affection. No one can fail to mark the constant gentleness of the solicitude pervading the entire chapters.

Godliness with contentment."An Abraham."

Out of this epistle has been chosen a passage for the study of the young people (and old) in the churches. Paul draws a calm picture of what the painters would call "still life." Then he suggests a vivid contrast that may serve as an offset to it. Next he recalls to Timothy's mind an inspiring remembrance. And then he utters an impressive admonition, backed with a singularly solemn appeal.

1. In the picture here presented, there is not much which is calculated to arrest attention. Indeed, the language would be pronounced rather commonplace. When men are in the hurry and rush for wealth, and the road is fairly dusty under the feet of those who are running, it seems prosaic for any voice to speak thus: "But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content."

A man, who should soberly assert that he was going to construct a life upon such a plain declaration, would be voted a lunatic by most of his fellows. Indeed, real religious self-denial has always been deemed weakness. A hundred and fifty years ago, people in Britain who spoke the colloquial English language—so the pious old Gurnall tells us—signified their contemptuous estimation of exact unworldliness by the nickname they gave. They said of a silly fool, "He is an *Abraham*." And those of us who were reared in New England will not need to be reminded that even now the villagers

John Jacob Astor.Godliness is gain.

speak of a temperate young man, weak in the head, as a "*Josey*." Abraham left a good place for a poorer at the call of the Lord. And Joseph refused sin when it came to him without the seeking. The world will never count such things as wise policies.

It is said that John Jacob Astor once replied to an inquisitive man, who asked him how much money he had, "Just enough, sir, so that I can eat one dinner a day!" How much wealth would a man need to enable him to eat two? And does a man want to wear his overcoat in the summer months, for fear people will think he cannot afford one?

There is a play upon words in one of these verses which ought not to be altogether overlooked. It would seem almost as if the apostle was dropping a sly sarcasm. Texts of Scripture must not be imagined to have two handles by which they can be wielded indifferently. Paul rebukes those who "suppose that gain is godliness." It may be wholesomely true that "godliness with contentment is great gain," while it would be dangerous to think that great contentment with gain is godliness. But still this same apostle presses the exact promise elsewhere: "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."

The force falls here upon the word "contentment." They say that foreigners have terrible inflictions when they try to pronounce and spell our term "enough."

Charles V. at Yuste.Bells in the steeple.

And everybody knows that our own countrymen find great difficulty in defining it.

Some people declare that they are unwilling to try to live plainly because it looks like singularity. Now singularity differs very much from individuality. I cannot say I think that one is improved by being singular. To me what Frenchmen call *outré* appears like what we call outrageous. But anybody can afford to be himself. Men have no business to be identical with their neighbors. It takes everybody to make a world. After his abdication, Charles V., in his retirement at Yuste, spent his heavy moments in experimenting to make a number of watches keep the same time. He failed constantly, and grew vexed. But in the end he drew an inference worth a record. He suddenly exclaimed: "Here am I, toiling on timepieces to force them to tick alike, and making ridiculous work: how much worse to waste patience in trying to force men and women to think alike or to be alike!"

There is an independence of feeling which Christian men certainly cherish; and in that is found their highest joy. How pitifully little does a babe bring with it! And how true is the old saying as to the dead: "Shrouds have no pockets!" How sweet that honest satisfaction which has all it wants, and wants but little, while it sings aloft, like Trinity bells up above Wall Street, or St. Paul's over Lombard, serene and beautiful in the clear air as the great wild world rushes and roars in its tumults beneath it!

Sheer imitation.Thought from Lacon.

2. This thought gains force from the quick contrast with which the apostle follows it in the verses under our eye : " But they that will be rich, fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil ; which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."

He makes direct appeal to common observation. The multitudes rush after wealth and show, and pursue shadows all in the same order and in the same way. Equipages are alike ; dresses come in patterns ; we put our latch-keys in our neighbor's door, because the houses are built in regular blocks, and we cannot tell our own. Sheer imitation is the law of fashion in both social and business life.

Says the thoughtful author of Lacon : " He that can be honest only because every one else is honest, or good only because all around him are good, might have continued an angel if he had been born one ; but being a man, he will only add to the number—numberless—who go to hell for the bad things they have done, and for not doing the good things they intended to have done."

The result of all this is sadness and unutterable dismay. To have tried to meet all the world's demands, and then to be rejected in the end, brings melancholy. And no one feels consoled in his " many sorrows " to remember that he pierced himself " through with them." Think of the indescribable disgust with which the witty Dean

"Prince Posterity."Spanish proverb.

Swift, despairing of a living recognition, dedicated one of his books to Prince Posterity!

The ancient motto—"Speak fair words, and you will hear kind echoes"—is not exactly true in such a world as ours. Something ridiculously mortifying always happens to the one whom the populace praises into conceit. I read only a little while ago in Greek history, that Æschylus, the poet, was so celebrated by many in his time, that they raised the story that he could not die save by a blow from high heaven. And, indeed, it so happened that an eagle flew up with a tortoise in his talons, and, desiring to break the shell, mistook the tragedian's bald head for a stone, and so let the heavy reptile come down on it: thus was fulfilled the precious oracle.

Nobody, however, learns the lesson. Yet the number of "pierced" men increases, and a morose feeling of discontent fills the air with complaints of injustice. Moments of success are often moments of mourning. Men at the top of things are oftener cynical than contented. They have reached their so-called prosperity just as they have lost the power to enjoy it. So they greet your congratulations with a reply from the Spanish book of proverbs: "The gods give plenty of almonds to the toothless!"

Hence it comes to pass that we can find a large class of men concealing their real disappointment under a sort of veil of philosophy. They say they have reached rest at last; ambition is satisfied; strife is over; all is calm. But their tranquillity is only the shame of what

"All quiet on the Potomac."

Timothy's childhood.

novelists call disenchantment, their passionless quiet is only satiety, their serenity is only disgust. It makes us think of that pathetic little card that went the rounds in the war : a great river swelling on in the moonlight, two or three hillocks with headboards white under the trees, no living thing beside the soldiers' graves, and the motto "All quiet on the Potomac." So worldlings quiet down at the last ; the fight has brought no victory, the weary march has caught no triumph ; the light is but a night-light, the stillness is nothing more than the solemnity of death.

3. The vision grows weird : it is a relief to turn now to the inspiring remembrance which the apostle recalls to his young friend's mind. With most rapid reversal, he shows better cheer : "But thou, O man of God, flee these things ; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses."

In this way he calls Timothy's recollection to the fact that he was an acknowledged and covenanted child of God. What his mother Eunice and his grandmother Lois had pledged for him, he had himself deliberately accepted ; so he was now irrevocably bound to a pure religious life.

How far one's public profession of faith may be pressed as a motive to unswerving fidelity ; what is the value of a piety which is held to consistency by the con-

Simon Stylites.

"Patriarchal gold-fish."

sciousness of a promise made before "many witnesses," it is not precisely easy to say. But surely no one can doubt that the appeal is legitimate. When old Simon Stylites put a railing around the top of the stone pillar he lived upon, in order to keep him from falling off over the edge, people laughed, and said sainthood was quite possible when so thoroughly protected. But it was wild bravado for him to tear the barriers away, after he had become used to them. We are all creatures of law. Restraints, if not leaned upon, have a registered worth as helps. In one of her bright books, George Eliot suggests as a somewhat quaint figure for our use the conduct of a "patriarchal gold-fish" in a glass globe. From long experience this sagacious creature had learned just how far to swim inside of the transparent limit so as to avoid striking the hard crystal with its nose. Thus it felt without feeling, and knew without recognizing, exactly when to turn in its course with a beautiful curve of avoidance. I judge that if one's "profession" be employed, not as a fret and restriction, but as a friendly reminder of the line between the world and the church, it will be of permanent value.

But the solid meaning of the counsel lies here. Conversion is admitted as a grand necessity and an essential fact. But it is the after-life which gives the anxiety. It may as well be said at once, and with all intensity, that any man will fail of excellence utterly, and will become lamentably a backslider, who does not immediately on his renunciation of the world construct a new

Construct a new life.A bankrupt.

life and begin to live in it. Timothy must be taught what to "flee," but, more yet, what to "follow." No man will be able to get on, or even to stand, unless he manages to make more of his Christian experience than a mere series of restraints and self-denials. He cannot live upon negatives.

Religion has within its reach a whole fresh world of delightful occupation. The best part of any beautiful city is always found a good distance inside of the fortifications erected for defences. So the real resources of believing life are attained a great way this side of the catechism commandments with their "requirings and forbiddings" of bristling conflict. One will miss the very essence and meaning of personal piety, if he supposes it merely to be an arrest and confinement of the soul in order to deliver it from the onsets of irresistible sins—resembling, perhaps, that merciful imprisonment sometimes given by his friends to a bankrupt, with a hope of defending him from being torn to pieces by implacable creditors ; it is not that, indeed.

The reason why so many people backslide after what they assume to be conversion is found exactly here : they will not enter the new world which the gospel provides, and so will not consent to live up to their own privileges. They try to sustain a precarious foothold upon the world they profess to be leaving. •Hence they keep making ungenerous comparisons. They permit many an unlawful hankering after surrendered lusts. Whereas the gospel adopts and announces a single standard. If one is

Holiness means wholeness.The final charge.

not with Christ, he is against him. Half-love is whole mockery. If a man claims to be a Christian, he must instantly be naturalized in the realm he has entered. *Holiness* is simply the old strong Saxon for *wholeness*.

That word "wholly" is a fine word. It can be followed all over the Bible with a concordance to the profit of us all. Paul told Timothy to put his entire self into his work : "Meditate upon these things ; give thyself wholly to them ; that thy profiting may appear to all." No person ever accomplished anything in this world who went at his task half-heartedly. So he says elsewhere to all Christians : "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly : and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

4. And now this true friend closes his words with the utterance of a most impressive admonition : "I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession ; that thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ : which in his times he shall show, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords ; who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto ; whom no man hath seen, nor can see : to whom be honor and power everlasting. Amen."

Some young people are imagining themselves tired of a religious life already : are you sure you actually know

Tired of religious life.The shepherd-boy.

anything about true religious life? Have you ever cast your lot *wholly* in with Christ and his friends, with a cheerful determination to find what are their pleasures and their joys? Have you ever really set out to take your chances with the people of God? And are you forced now to confess that you have exhausted the entire round of legitimate happiness, used up Christian amusements, and squeezed out all the juices from even the richest fruits growing on the tree of life? Is it a fact that the gospel fails in its promise?

“How is it that thou hast found it so quickly, my son?” Well, if you are tired of the New Testament, will you read a bit of Pilgrim’s Progress, which I sometimes think stands next to it? There was a shepherd-boy, who was overheard singing in a gentle voice by himself; Great-heart called attention to his song:

“He that is down needs fear no fall;

He that is low, no pride;

He that is humble ever shall

Have God to be his guide.”

It was this lad who lived the merriest life, and had most of the herb called heart’s-ease in his bosom. He dwelt in the Valley of Humiliation.

Did you ever watch a happy bird poised on a branch in the tree? To you the twig on which he rested seemed exceedingly slender and unsafe, but there he tossed and floated and swayed in the wind; there he joyously sang and sported; careless whether the spray bent or broke

A bird on a twig.Ancient baptisms.

the next moment. For folded at his side *he had wings*. If he fell, he simply fell on his feathers, and rested as he rose. The sky was his home. It was only just for the moment he stopped at the forest. He could make use of any convenient leaf, twig, or trunk in it, but not even the whole wood could injure or hinder him. Piety is the soul's pinions as well as its plumage. It beautifies it at the moment it sustains it. Even in the world, the Christian has "godliness with contentment," and finds it "great gain." But he can leave it any time at God's will.

Read over once more this appeal at the end of the passage. At ancient baptisms, the officiating minister used to fold the white linen garment which the young Christian wore, and hand it back to him : then he would say, "See thou present this robe of your profession spotless at the judgment-seat of Christ !"

XI.

THE CHRISTIAN CITIZEN.

PUT THEM IN MIND TO BE SUBJECT TO PRINCIPALITIES AND POWERS,
TO OBEY MAGISTRATES, TO BE READY TO EVERY GOOD WORK,
TO SPEAK EVIL OF NO MAN, TO BE NO BRAWLERS, BUT GENTLE,
SHOWING ALL MEEKNESS UNTO ALL MEN.—*Titus* 3: 1, 2.

PERHAPS no finer proof of the one inalienable sense of our common humanity can be furnished at an instant call, than what is given in the fact that a great picture derives the most of its power from the presence in it of some one, or more than one, human figure; and specially when that figure represents an individual in the extremity of emotion, of penitence or passion, or even of physical pain. Andromeda, fast to the wild rock, constrains us to gaze upon herself more than upon the monster which threatens or the champion who advances to deliver her. Prometheus, bound to the cliff-side, rivets our eyes upon him as possessing an energy of awful appeal far beyond the majesty of the ocean before him, or the wrath of high heaven gathered in blackness overhead. For he is a man, and we are men; so we instinctively and inevitably take sides with him in the fight of forces.

Something like this is the feeling with which, in imagination, we contemplate the life and times of Paul, or

A good man solitary.

The "little bird."

of Titus, the youthful preacher to whom he once sent an epistle. Let some historical artist draw for us a picture of the Roman empire as it then was. Our attention would be more quickly arrested by the forms of those few Christians who appeared in it, than by any mere political grandeur or showy social life which it exhibited in colors no matter how glowing. "A good man struggling with adversity is a sight for the gods to look at." So those old Latin people used to say in their poems. We are sure that no spectacle is more attractive, in our easy day, than that of one of those patient, early evangelists surrounded by the heathen. A general sense of solitariness pervades the scene, actually heightened by the pathos of the single-handed soldier of the cross holding his place with sad bravery and hopeless valor. Fidelity will be rewarded, but martyrdom is near.

It makes one think of the ancient and well-known ingenuity of artistic skill. Solitude is best represented on canvas by a life in the midst of the loneliness—the loneliness vast; the life small and at a disadvantage. We all remember the anecdote of that painter who had pictured his deserted forest—wild, forsaken, dreary—but away down in a corner, on a twig of a blasted tree, sat a diminutive sparrow, evidently bereaved of its mate. Many bystanders in the gallery felt what they could not criticise. But the great artist Turner moved up quietly behind his comrade, and with eyes full of moisture said, "I saw your little bird!"

All alone in Crete.Obey the law.

Take that third chapter of the epistle to Titus, and let us read over the verses together. Vividly conceive of this young man surrounded by a world of wickedness and wrong, and then listen to Paul, the aged, as he talks.

1. The very earliest lesson which is suggested is, that individual excellence is what makes national strength. For there can be no mistaking of the directness of the apostle's counsel. He tells Titus that he must preach personal purity, obedience, and peace, to all the citizens around him : "Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work, to speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, showing all meekness unto all men."

We must remember that the case was hard just at that time. On the imperial throne sat a miscreant no less conspicuous and intolerable than Nero. His name has been handed down along the ages as one of the vilest and wickedest rulers the world ever knew. Yet Paul exhorted all Christians to abide steadily in a life of law and order. But it required a great grace of patience to respect such "powers" as were at the head of the government in Titus's day.

We have our croakers now, finding a vast deal of fault with those in the lead of affairs in republican America. It ought to arrest attention of such that the apostle, even in worse circumstances than any we ever yet have known in our land, said, as Simon Peter said likewise : "Obey

Cretians always liars.True charity.

your magistrates, be subject to the higher powers : submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake : whether it be to the king, as supreme ; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well."

Then think what a vile herd of common creatures this young Christian had around him. He was dwelling in Crete, an island in the Mediterranean now called Candia. The inhabitants were reckoned as among the worst in the world ; and they are the hardest people in the East now. They were the proverbial "liars" of the age. A hundred great cities told of their wealth and prosperity. But the citizens were violent and quarrelsome, coarse and profane, licentious and untrustworthy. "One of themselves, even a prophet of their own, said, 'The Cretians are always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies.'" Yet Paul told Titus to be patient and keep his temper. A gentleman is only a "gentle" man ; politeness is (etymologically) good citizenship. "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men, teaching us, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly, in this present world."

2. Hence a second lesson follows right on this : Charity to others is best promoted by an honest consideration of what we are ourselves. No man, who is conscientious, can fail to remember many a mean act he has during his life committed. Most of us could tell the day and the

Patriotism, "the last refuge."Sir Robert Walpole.

hour when we did palpable injustice to some one—we were inconsiderate, selfish, suspicious ; we pushed too hard and drove one who was weaker to the wall ; we interjected into some mind a vein of bitterness for all time ; we indulged personal tastes and appetites to the worry and pain of some who loved us dearly. "For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another."

It is very hard to rise above the social or domestic atmosphere we are accustomed to breathe, so as to inhale the serener air on the elevated plains of purity and justice and eternal right. But men must be willing to be odd in order to be honest. "Live with your century," says Schiller, "but be not its creature ; bestow upon your contemporaries, not what they praise, but what they need."

What is the use of continuous railing at public men ? Is anybody happier in quoting the cynic Dr. Johnson : "Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel ?" Sir Robert Walpole observed once it was fortunate that few men could be prime ministers ; because it was fortunate that few men could know the abandoned profligacy of the human mind ; and he added, with his well-known sarcasm, that every individual had his price.

Thus the man who carps most is the one who falls quickest. If all men have their price, what was Walpole's ? Is it any worse meanness for little men to be bought up, than for big men (who know better) to buy

them? Did you ever see a foolish farmer's boy, trimming trees, cut off the very branch he was sitting on, sawing through between himself and the trunk?

3. We move on to reach a third lesson. The apostle tells Titus that he will make the better citizen the oftener he recalls to mind how much he owes, and must forever owe, to sovereign grace, as a child of God and an heir of heaven: "But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that, being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life."

People nowadays are excessively diffident in attributing their successes or their virtues to their piety. Yet now and then the world will find it out for itself. "Havelock's men" in campaigns wrote their record by their prayers as well as by their prowess. In our own war there was a regiment that loved to march into battle singing the refrain, "I'm going home, to die no more!" They got the nickname, of course, and were called the "Die-no-mores." But officers observed that these tranquil men stood while others failed, and did not cower nor whine when they were wounded.

Philip of Macedon used to boast that he had taken a great many more towns in his campaigns with silver than he had with iron. Soldiers of the cross surely

Rutherford in Aberdeen.Our early history.

ought never to be bought in with corruption. But they must remember that Satan has coin as well as cannon, and what onsets of violence are sometimes quite unable to accomplish, seductions of vice will often bring about.

The highest motive, and the sweetest solace, that ever swayed or soothed human experience, lies in the simple, grand recollection, "I am God's own child by grace, my Saviour is his only begotten Son, and heaven is my home because he loves me!"

When the world pursues a Christian, with that hope in his heart, it usually finds him far out of reach. Think of good old Rutherford writing from the prison of Aberdeen. He repeats the words of the prophet, "And a man shall be as an hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place; as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." And then he adds: "I creep under my Lord's wings in the great shower, and the waters cannot reach me. Let fools laugh the fools' laughter and scorn Christ, and bid the weeping captives in Babylon sing them one of the songs of Zion. We may sing, even in our winter's tempest, in the expectation of our summer's sun at the turn of the year. No created powers in hell, or out of hell, can mar our Lord's work, or spoil our song of joy. Let us then be glad and rejoice in the salvation of our Lord; for faith hath never yet the cause to have tearful eyes or a saddened brow."

Surely, patriotism rooted in personal piety ought to

Jewish weddings.

Pierpont's hymn.

be found in our land more frequently than anywhere else in the world. The early colonies which started these States were all missionary associations. The foundations of this republic were laid with prayers and tears of devout and self-sacrificing men. At every Jewish wedding, the bride spills on the floor the wine that is handed her, to denote that Israel's spiritual glory has passed away; and then in turn the groom breaks the goblet, to show that her temporal dominion is also in ruins. Oh, if the time ever comes, when our own dear country shall experience a like desolation, when the sad bride of a mournful groom shall need to dash at her feet the glittering emblems of national destruction, it will be because we have forgotten the God whom our fathers honored, and suffered the walls of his Zion to crumble under the derelictions of our service and the weakness of our faith! Let us hope for better things.

“ The pilgrim spirit has not fled ;
It walks in the noon's broad light ;
It watches the bed of the glorious dead,
With the holy stars by night—
It watches the bed of the brave who have bled,
And shall guard the ice-bound shore,
Till the waves of the bay, where the Mayflower lay,
Shall foam and freeze no more ! ”

4. Finally, the apostle adds a lesson for his friend Titus about his preaching, which every Christian, trying to instruct others, might lay well to heart; namely, that the best of all teaching in truth is the teaching of a

Young convert's peril.Maurice's motto.

true life. He tries to lead him away from mere formulas, and force him to deal with real things in a real way for greatest good : " This is a faithful saying ; and these things I will that thou affirm constantly ; that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men. But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law ; for they are unprofitable and vain."

"After the first phase of Christian life," remarks Merle d'Aubigné, "in which a man thinks only of Christ, there usually ensues a second, when the Christian will not voluntarily worship with assemblies opposed to his personal convictions." That is a gentle way of saying that, after a new convert cools a little in piety, he takes a time of becoming denominational and belligerent. Perhaps the apostle Paul imagined Titus was going to do that, and so told him he had better not.

If there be any truth in the line "The child is father of the man," it is manifest most plainly in religious life. The young believer perpetuates himself in the old. Maurice, son of William the Silent, at the age of seventeen, took for his device a fallen oak, with a young sapling springing from its root ; to this he gave the motto, *Tandem fit surculus arbor*, "The sapling will by and by become a tree." It seems very trite to write all that out soberly ; but really it is a thing most unfortunately forgotten.

Some young citizens are ambitious to get a name, and

Cato's suggestion.

Real usefulness.

help give a name to their country. Cato once remarked most suggestively that he would rather posterity should inquire why no statues had ever been erected to him, than why some were. It is a better thing to *be* than to *do*. A life is a nobler gift to one's country than any achievement. I would rather that some dear friend, in the quiet hour when he was thinking of me, should say "He was thoughtful for the right, and not so much for the brilliant ; he said little, but he *lived true* ; he stood, when it would have been easy to break ; he was 'careful to maintain good works ;' he saw the truth, and loved it to the end,"—I would rather one said that of me, than that he said I was one of the marked men of my age.

And then as to usefulness also ; how may a young Christian do most good ? I answer, by being good himself. What a work this is for us all, like the young Titus, to be permitted to hold to thirsty lips the water of life, then to mark how they drink it, how they are instantly quickened and begin to sing ! Possibly some Christians are discouraged when they think of poor results. Perhaps you never were made the instrument in converting a single soul as yet. There is no reason why you should not be. You long for this reward ; very well, portion it out for 'yourself ; it is attainable. Put a sign upon it for your possession in the sight of God ; say prayerfully, "Give me the supreme grace of turning this sinner to the cross ;" he will give it to you ; and it is worth your choice.

I choose to fortify this point by a personal reminis-

The five-barred gate.Payson's exultation.

cence. Out from my early, and sometimes erring, ministry comes an affectionate memory of the past. Some few grown young men in my congregation, seeing the silly pride which made many of their own age forsake the Sabbath-school as they came on in years, organized themselves into a Bible-class, and took turns in its leadership. They planted their curved seat close by the door, and sent their name to me, as it appeared on the list—"The Pastor's Five-barred Gate." Year after year they kept their position, growing in grace, as they grew in knowledge of the word. Nobody raised the question in that school thereafter. Any vain pupil who would be wise (Job 11:12), though "born like a wild ass's colt," had to leap that five-barred gate to get out of the blessed enclosure. I have lived long since then, seen those dear friends rise into honor and usefulness in the church of Christ, despite of their odd name. And gratefully, I here acknowledge the power of their simple-hearted fidelity.

A Sunday-school class is only a little congregation of five or ten, and the teacher is its preacher as truly as Titus was "bishop" in Crete. Said the dying Payson: "Oh! if ministers only saw the inconceivable glory that is before them, and only felt the preciousness of Christ, they would not be able to refrain from going about, leaping, and clapping their hands for joy, exclaiming, 'I'm a minister of Christ! I'm a minister of Christ!'"

XII.

SHADOW AND SUBSTANCE.

WHICH ARE A SHADOW OF THINGS TO COME ; BUT THE BODY IS OF
CHRIST.—*Colossians 2 : 17.*

MOST enthusiastic readers of the Holy War will recall one passage of singular interest, in which Bunyan relates that upon a time Immanuel the prince made a feast for the town of Mansoul, and the folk came together to the castle to partake of his banquet. There was food furnished from his father's court ; there was music also all the while at the table ; and, after the feast was over, Immanuel was for entertaining the town with some curious riddles of secrets, drawn up by his father's secretary, by the wisdom and skill of Shaddai ; the like to these there are not in any kingdom. The riddles were made upon King Shaddai himself, and upon Immanuel his son, and upon his wars and doings with Mansoul.

So the story runs on : "Immanuel also expounded unto them some of those riddles himself, but, oh, how they were lightened ! They saw what they never saw before ; they could not have thought that such rarities could have been couched in so few and such ordinary words. Yea, when these riddles were opened, the people gathered that the things themselves were a kind of

Feast in Mansoul.

"The body is of Christ."

portraiture, and that of Immanuel himself. For when they read in the scheme where the riddles were writ, and looked in the face of the prince, things seemed so like one to the other that Mansoul could not forbear but say—"This is the Lamb, this is the Sacrifice, this is the Rock, this is the Red Heifer, this is the Door, and this is the Way"—with a great many other things more."

At the bottom of the page, one finds the foot-note of stiff explanation, quaint and stately as usual: "The riddles seem to refer chiefly to the types of Christ, which abound in the Scriptures, and which are full of divine entertainment to gracious and enlightened souls. The very portraiture of Jesus is seen in them. Meditation on them adds greatly to the delights of the gospel feast."

But an authority much higher than either John Bunyan or his annotator has set this entire matter at rest. In one of his plainest discourses our Lord said: "Search the Scriptures: for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me."

Hence this passage in the ninth chapter of Hebrews, which the classes are soon going to study in detail, is nothing more nor less than a reiteration with extensive particulars of what Jesus in person had declared would be the grand reward for all faithful Scripture study. If men would only read the Bible as it ought to be read, they would be sure to find Christ everywhere in it. Even the most intricate and mysterious ceremonials of

that former dispensation which vanished when the Saviour came would surprise us with their clearness of reference to him and his work.

This suggests to us the way in which to examine the Old Testament as a whole. See in its entire record—history, prophecy, rites of worship and songs of praise—symbols and signs, emblems, allegories, and figures, “which are a shadow of things to come ; but the body is of Christ.”

The apostle has been telling the Hebrew Christians that many of those matters which they had considered peculiarly Jewish, selfishly claiming them as national and special to themselves, were of Christian relevance and belonged to the whole world. The tabernacle was cosmopolitan, Aaron's rod and the pot of manna were of universal ownership. Even the high-priesthood would have to be generously shared with those of every age and nation under the canopy of heaven. He went in before the altar for the great race of men :—“The Holy Ghost this signifying, That the way into the Holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing : which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience ; which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation. But Christ being come a high-priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not

made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us."

I.—Now let us look, in the first place, at the legitimate method of work which this principle suggests, and trace out a few results to which it will lead.

I. Of course, we shall expect to find the person and office of our Lord typed now and then in the historic characters of the Old Testament. As, for example, Moses; for Simon Peter mentions him, quoting his very words: "For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you, of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things, whatsoever he shall say unto you." Very interesting would be the exercise, with some of the bright children in our Christian families, to ask and answer how many things in this famous leader's life would remind us of Jesus. How was our Lord "like unto" Moses? Threatened in infancy—rejected by those he came to serve—fasting forty days in the wilderness of Sinai—transfigured on the mount—so the enumeration would run on.

Jacob also would invite study; for that wonderful ladder of his which he saw at Bethel reappears in the New Testament record with a gospel meaning attached to it. Nathanael must have noticed the reference when Christ spoke to him: "And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you. Hereafter ye shall see heaven

Joseph's history.Christ our Passover.

open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man."

Joseph's story, likewise, is full of suggestion. How much like Jesus' "Come unto me" does this remembered verse sound, if we call to mind the whole history behind it: "And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you: and they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt."

2. Then in the ritual and the ceremonies of that old dispensation we should be sure to find Christ. Indeed, this is the entire force of the passage before us now. The candlestick, the table of shew-bread, the censer, Aaron's rod, and the pot of manna, are all declared to be without significance, unless we remember the lessons they had to teach concerning the Saviour. A mere figure "for the time then present" was this whole tabernacle scheme: the substance was Christ. The scape-goat was a "portraiture" of Christ. The cities of refuge symbolized Christ. The New Testament writers make no hesitation in passing over to Christ's account even the sacredest festivals of Jewish history. The apostle Paul exhorts the Corinthians: "Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us." Why not raise in this case also the question with children, How was our Lord Jesus like the lamb whose blood was sprinkled on the door-posts?

3. There seems almost no end to such disquisitions;

The brazen serpent.The cure for sin.

but one thing more may profitably be instanced. In the annals of ordinary history often may the prediction or the picture of the living Christ be found. No more pertinent illustration of this could be given than that which our Lord himself employed with Nicodemus on the occasion of that ruler's visit to him in the night: "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." The whole gospel of grace is in such a story as this. Indeed, so vivid is the figure that one helps to make the New Testament plain, as he rehearses the Old Testament narrative of that part of the Exodus. We see the hopelessness of human ruin in the writhing pain of the men bitten by the fiery serpents; we note the sovereignty of the divine interposition, as we perceive Moses placing the brazen image upon the erected pole in the camp; we are ready to sing "There is life for a look at the crucified One," when we gaze at the multitudes coming up for a relief; and we rejoice that a cure for sin has been made permanent and complete, as we read of those people healed on the instant in answer to their faith.

Thus everywhere in the Scriptures we find a far-reaching prediction of redemption and of a redeemer for men. The very texture of the record appears at times designedly transparent, as if it had been intended to adorn what it was not yet quite ready to reveal. One reads portions of that ancient book, which was all the

An oriental maiden.Exegesis and eisegesis.

"Bible" men had when the epistle to the Hebrews was first written, as the enthusiastic tourist looks at the veil of an oriental maiden he meets—a mere gauze across the beautiful countenance, heightening a loveliness which it hardly pretends to conceal. His earliest thought may be, How exquisite is the fabric! But his exclamation comes instantly afterward, Oh, how sweet is the face!

II.—From this it is becoming that we turn for a moment to consider, in the second place, one altogether illegitimate application of the principle we have been seeking to illustrate.

It is not true that every verse of inspired writing has a hidden gospel meaning lying under its plain statement, as if it floated "swan and shadow" on the stream of revelation. It is useless and harmful to pervert *exegesis* into *eisegesis*, and put Christ in where he is not. It is not too much to say that there are whole paragraphs and chapters which do not touch on the gospel plan or experience.

After familiar observation during some years, I feel inclined to think that in searching the Scriptures more failures are made in reference to the true object and methods of search than in anything else. What are our modern Bereans looking for in the Bible? And are they content with what they really find?

It is because commentators and even private Christians have followed an undefined or a shifting purpose, or, perhaps, no purpose at all, that they have made such

House-light and light-house.Abraham married Keturah.

strange endeavors after originality, and have accomplished so little at last. Dr. Hamilton's bright antithesis is quite in point: "That vessel is always liable to go awreck whose headstrong pilot mistakes a house-light for a light-house." The one worthy end at which a sincere Bible student should aim is this: merely to ascertain what the word really says and simply means. "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

The motto of the mystics was: "The Scriptures mean all that they can be made to mean." The rabbins of old said there was not a letter, nor even an apex of a letter, which did not contain whole mountains of meaning. And so they fashioned anagrams, and counted the transcribed characters, and estimated the lines, and read the sentences backward. Putting everything in, they of course drew everything out, finding marvels and mysteries without limit, but quietly often missing the truth, or belittling it with nonsense.

One of the ancient expositors read in the sacred history how Abraham in his later years married Keturah. Knowing that this woman's name, *Keturah*, meant "sweet odors," and remembering that sweet odors were used as a symbol of spiritual graces, he drew from this intricate combination of fragments of learning a most felicitously original thought; namely, that before he died the Father of the Faithful became supereminently sanctified. Now the pious patriarch did what doubtless was perfectly proper; but taking a new wife in his old age is in

The world's "Eureka!"New Testament privileges.

many respects quite a different thing from growing in grace.

III.—So much, then, for a discussion of the general principle involved in these verses. It remains for us now to state just a few of the lessons of excellent bearing which they suggest.

1. Let us try to appreciate the exultation of feeling with which believers under the Old Testament received the fresh disclosures of the New. Andrew opened an unusually wide store of exciting information when he made his brother Simon Peter understand that in all serious likelihood Jesus of Nazareth was Israel's actual Messiah. Meaning of untold and indescribable importance was condensed into the explosive language he used when he announced to him, "We have found the Christ!" This was the world's glad "*Eureka*" after forty centuries of groping among the shadows and symbols of a dying dispensation. "But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away: how shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious? For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory."

2. So let us ourselves come to a proper estimate of our own increased privileges under the New Testament. When we reach the Gospels, after working our way wearily through the first division of the Bible, we seem

“We have found the Christ !”The Old Testament.

to have struggled forth from a forest path of emblems and signs, where only lances of fitful illumination could glance into the gloom occasionally, out upon the cleared hillside of revelation, where the full sunshine of grace lies over every prospect. There was one little formula of great meaning, drawn from Andrew's exclamation, perhaps, which served the strict purpose of a primitive creed to all those new disciples, and which might well become familiar upon our tongues. Philip took it up easily when he proclaimed to Nathanael: “We have found him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.” The passionate longing of many a generation was concentrated into that one utterance. We have entered into a fulness they never knew, now in these latter days. “Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see. For I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them ; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.”

3. Still, let us learn to respect the Old Testament for the sake of the gospel there certainly was in it. It has grown fashionable to speak slightly of that former dispensation. But many souls of men were saved under it. Just now we discover from an unmistakable chapter here before us that all of that early record was full of Christ. Abraham saw the day of Christ afar off, and was glad. During four thousand years, never had any devout Hebrew mother fastened her first eager look

The seed of the woman.Moore's couplet.

upon her new-born babe without solemnly wondering whether it might not be her child which was to be "the seed of the woman" to fulfil the Paradise promise and "bruise the serpent's head." Those people must have known in many particulars what they were praying for. The visions of the impetuous seers, the inspired symbols of the ceremonial law, the fervid predictions of the singing psalmists, all pointed toward one luminous star which was hanging out in the future over the manger where Immanuel should be born.

4. Think, then, how rich with wealth of spiritual meaning are both of these two Testaments that lie in our hands so freely to-day. To the glory of the poetry add the greater glory of the prediction it contains. To the splendor of the ritual, add the greater splendor of the Christ it symbolized. So we learn that there are verses of the Bible with a double degree of meaning—like the rainbow which is beautiful beyond everything else for just what is seen of it, and then more beautiful still for the sake of the grand covenant it seals. Oh, what reaches and spans of measureless comfort there are in such promises; yet God, who gave them, sits unexhausted in grace beyond! How well to search the Scriptures!

"So the sky we look up to, though glorious and fair,
Is looked up to the more because heaven lies there!"

5. Then let us remember what grandeur and majesty there is in the services of God's house. If only the

God's house.

Mysteries explained.

spirit be carefully preserved, forms may well be gorgeous and significant. This whole chapter is crowded with the meaning that lay hid in the tabernacle. God's dwelling should be the finest dwelling in the town. Music should make it welcome with the highest consecration of art. Each Christian should enter a New Testament church singing in his heart: "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God." And he should leave it promising: "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy."

6. Finally, let us remember the sanctuary overhead. "*Via crucis, via lucis!*" So the old monks used to chant in mediæval songs. Through all the shadows, out at last into the pure light, does the way lead which starts in lonely and lowly steps beside Jesus' cross. The assurance comes with a vast welcome to every tried heart that is sometimes heavy here with worry and care. Life appears a wilderness of little-understood visions and shows. Will these mysteries, like the similitudes of the tabernacle, ever have an explanation? Will the unrealities which lie over us, even now in New Testament times, ever fully disappear? Will the confusions ever clear that make this existence of ours so perplexing? Hear the answer: "But Christ being come an high-

Eternal redemption.Arnold's remark.

priest of good things to come, by a great and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building: neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us."

With the endless ages of that new life open before us for our study and God's explanation, we ought to be willing to remain unfretted now. Arnold says well: "Before a confessed and unconquerable difficulty, the mind, if in a healthy state, reposes as quietly as when in the possession of a discovered truth; as quietly and contentedly as we are accustomed to bear that law of our nature which denies us the power of seeing through all space, or of being exempt from sickness or decay." We can afford to wait till all these earthly shadows find their substance: "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known."

XIII.

SAVING FAITH.

NOW FAITH IS THE SUBSTANCE OF THINGS HOPED FOR, THE EVIDENCE OF THINGS NOT SEEN.—*Hebrews* II : I.

THERE were those who one time asked the Saviour, "What shall we do that we might work the works of God?" To this he replied, "*This* is the work of God, that ye *believe* on him whom he hath sent."

The issue, then, between God and men is narrowed down to this—"only believe." "He that believeth on the Son of God is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God." Hence, the true and only answer to an inquiring sinner is, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

No man, however, can be an inquirer except under the influence of the Holy Ghost. No man can come to Christ "except the Father draw him." If he comes asking, that proves that he comes drawn. Hence, the folly of those who profess to be waiting for the Spirit in order to believe. They *have* the Spirit; they are *resisting* him, instead of waiting for him, this very moment. And hence, the correction, also, of all false views of those who deem it perilous to urge on every soul the

duty of immediate and believing surrender to Christ : that is the Spirit's work, it is admitted ; but this is the man's duty. *He is under the power of the Spirit from the moment he asks the way.* And we are bound to bid him believe and be saved. If he cannot understand it, we must explain it. This is what I now am attempting to do.

I. Let us inquire, first, the meaning of the term. There are no less than five significations of it found in the Bible.

1. Sometimes the word refers merely to a creed, with no notion in it of spiritual experience at all. Thus Paul tells his friend Timothy : "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils." And so writes Jude : "Ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." Here the meaning is manifest ; a simple grouping of revealed doctrines in a system.

2. When the Bible speaks of faith, it sometimes means mere belief in facts. "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." This kind of faith is necessary, in a certain sense, to salvation : "for he that cometh to God must believe that he is; and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." The facts of the Saviour's life are to be received in that way. But this is not saving faith at all. For we read that even the devils "be-

Logical faith.

Faith of miracles.

lieve and tremble." They know all about the history of the Prince of Salvation, but are not benefited by their knowledge.

3. Again ; faith sometimes means that conviction of the understanding which results from proofs laid before it, or arguments adduced. This is that which the woman wrought among her neighbors when she came back from the conversation with Jesus, at Jacob's well : "And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did." It received great quickening from the interviews with the Messiah they had for themselves ; for then they "said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying ; for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world." This also is the faith which Thomas had, when, being asked to put his hand in the side of his Lord, and his finger in the prints of the nails, he was constrained by the evidence to admit the reality of the resurrection. "Because thou hast seen," said Jesus to him, "thou hast believed." But this is not saving faith ; for our Lord immediately added, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

4. And sometimes the Bible means the faith of miracles. This was a peculiar gift, bestowed by Christ upon his immediate followers, in order that they might attest their divine mission by using divine power. This is what he intended when he said, "If ye have faith, if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and

A right apprehension.

A drowning man.

be thou cast into the sea, it shall be done." Now, whatever was the nature of this peculiar endowment, it is evident enough that there was no grace in it to save the soul; for the Saviour himself declared, "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name have cast out devils, and in thy name have done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you."

5. Then, lastly, the Bible means saving faith; the true belief in the Lord Jesus Christ, through which we are justified, and by which we live.

II. In the second place, let us inquire concerning the nature of this exercise. The old writers used to say that faith was composed of three elements: a right Apprehension, a cordial Assent, and an unwavering Trust. Let me seek to exhibit these in turn in a very familiar way.

1. To *apprehend* is really a physical act, and means to seize hold of. When applied to mental operation, it signifies to conceive clearly any given object, and hold it before the mind for examination and use. It does not always include a full comprehension; and this is so especially true in reference to matters connected with the plan of salvation, that I shall seek to have it very explicitly understood here in the outset. A drowning man may catch a rope that hangs near him, and be rescued by it, without knowing who threw it to him, or who will draw it in, or what vessel it trails from. He apprehends it, but he does not comprehend it. He sees it, but he

Apprehend and comprehend.

The brazen serpent.

does not see all with which it is connected. The fleeing Hebrew might not know who erected the guide-posts on the way to the cities of refuge, or how they were instrumental in saving him from the avenger of blood when he was within the walls. But he would need to see the great letters of the word "Refuge" that was printed on them, and note the direction in which the index finger pointed.

Now, a careless confounding of these terms has caused a great many mistakes on the part of those who declare they "will not believe what they cannot understand." They are not required to believe what they cannot *apprehend*; but they do believe, over and over again, even in the common matters of life, what they cannot *comprehend*. The growing of the grass, the circulation of the blood, are as complete mysteries to human understanding as the doctrine of the Trinity or the Incarnation. I must not turn away from coming to the Saviour, because I cannot see *how* God could be manifest in the flesh. Enough is it for me, that the Scriptures reveal the mysterious fact that he has been.

And here you see, therefore, how much any sinner can claim before he yields, and how little. He may ask just as much information as the Israelite bitten by the fiery serpent in the wilderness might ask: "Where is that image of brass? what must I do when I approach it?" When Moses had replied, "It is close by you in the midst of the camp; you are only to look and to live;" then his solemn duty began, and he was respon-

Means of grace.Humble assent.

sible for his own delay. With the philosophy of the cure he had nothing to do.

The two essential things for every man to apprehend, are his own need, and Jesus Christ's fitness to supply it. There is the inward look, and then there is the outward look. I cannot help myself, and the Saviour can help me—are the two thoughts that must lie buried deep in his soul. It matters little how these things are learned. "There are diversities of operations, but the same Spirit." The Holy Ghost may teach one person through the reading of the word ; another person through some stroke of providence, or by the ministry of reconciliation. In one way or another the soul must come to see its ruin and its Redeemer ; to feel its helplessness and know its Helper. It may not see how it came to be so desperately ruined, nor how Jesus can be of such paramount relief to it. It may know no more than blind Bartimeus did ; that he could not see, and that the Nazarene Healer was passing by. Those two things, however, every sinner needs to perceive.

2. Then comes the second element of faith, already mentioned—namely, *assent*. This is a step in advance of the other. A simple illustration will make plain what is meant by it. An invalid is sometimes very unwilling to admit his danger, even when he has nothing to oppose to the reasoning of one who proves it. He feels his weakness, but he resorts to a thousand subterfuges to avoid yielding to the physician. His judgment is convinced, but his will is unbroken. He apprehends

Naaman's pride.

"Some great thing."

his danger, and knows the remedy ; but he refuses to be helped. What he needs now is assent ; and this requires humility and the renunciation of self-will.

Naaman might not know, and really had no need to know—no right to claim to know—how the river Jordan could cure leprosy, or what virtue there would be in seven bathings, or what authority Elisha had to send him there. But he needed to understand clearly the prophet's directions, so as not to mistake the name of the stream, or err as to what he was to do when he reached it, or forget the number of times he was to wash to be clean. And this he had a fair right to know before the crime of disobedience was urged upon him. "But Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper."

Evidently, this Syrian captain's pride was wounded. He imagined that the prophet was going to show him the consideration due to his importance. He did not like to be thrown on himself in this way. He would not own up his utter helplessness, and the wretchedness of his incurable disease. Nor did he like the method of relief. He complained of the river ; Jordan water is muddy and yellow. "Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel ? may I not wash in them, and be clean ? So he turned and went away in a rage." In the end, you remember, it was his retinue that helped him make an absolute

The Syrophœnician woman.Implicit trust.

surrender. "And his servant came near, and spake unto him, and said, My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?"

Faith includes this. It calls for a cheerful submission to God's requirements, the moment we apprehend them, no matter how humiliating the assertion of our ill-desert may be. When the Syrophœnician woman came pleading to our Saviour, he gave her faith a most severe testing before he granted her petition. "It is not meet," he said, "to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs." Now, did she grow angry at this rebuff? Did she refuse to admit its justice? Did she go away grieved, because he seemed to be harsh to her? No, indeed; she admitted it all. "Truth, Lord," said she, "yet the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from their master's table." Then he raised her up, saying, "O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee as thou wilt." She not only saw the truth, but assented to it likewise, though the admission was humbling in the extreme. And so must the inquiring sinner give assent to all the teachings of the gospel, self-abasing as they are; admit everything; throw up all excuses; leave all refuges of lies; renounce self altogether; "only believe."

3. The third element of saving faith is *trust*. By this I mean reliance on the truth of what God said he would do; a quiet resting on his promises to accomplish all we need for salvation. You remember in the case of the

The centurion.The Passover.

centurion, our Lord declared he "had not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." Now, what was it that made his faith in particular so great, so peculiar in itself, and so superior in the estimation of the Saviour? Simply the presence in it of superabounding trust. He had asked for a gift of healing to be bestowed upon his servant lying at home sick. To his request Jesus replied, "I will come and heal him." One would think that now the centurion would doubt a little. Might not the Saviour forget his promise in the multiplicity of his cares? Might he not delay coming till too late? Even this suspicion made his trust a matter of somewhat difficult exercise; and yet that man was willing to go further. He was content to rest on a mere declaration, without a promise. "Speak the word only," said he, "and my servant shall be healed." He did not care to have the Saviour's presence, if he would only say the man should be whole. Then he could depart to his house restful and satisfied.

Let us take one more illustration; that which is offered in the ancient passover scene. Moses told the Israelites to sprinkle a lamb's blood on the door-posts, and the destroying angel would not enter their dwellings. Picture a father, whose first-born was dear to him as the apple of his eye. As that solemn midnight drew near, it is possible his heart would grieve with anxiety. But he would say aloud: "I have done all I was told to do; I know the blood-drops are on my door; I rest in Moses' promise, for I am sure he spoke for God;

"Only believe."General experience.

here, then, I take my stand, and am going to wait the issue ; there is no more to do !"

This is trust ; acquiescence without question, restfulness without wavering ; and it is the most essential part of faith, and yet the most difficult to exercise. Almost all in our Christian communities have two of the elements of faith already mentioned. They know the Saviour's history. They understand his gospel plan. They have been told his ability and his willingness to save them. A first step then, apprehension, has been taken. And so has a second, assent, been taken by very many. They do not doubt one word that God has spoken. They feel their ruin. They are under a constant conviction of sin. They admit everything. Now, what yet do they need ? Nothing except this third step, *trust* ; "only believe." Rely on the Saviour. Rest in him. Hold to his truth in all he says.

III. The use to be made of this analysis, comes next to view. We are ready to speak to any inquiring sinner within our reach directly, and this is what the Scriptures teach us to say.

Your experience hitherto has been something like this. You have seen your need ; you have admitted it ; you have gone in prayer to Jesus confessing it. Told to pray, you did pray. Moved by some faithful sermon, or tract, or conversation, you have gone home to the privacy of your own chamber, making sober resolution to become a Christian at once. You knew you had been a sinner, condemned to eternal death. You as-

sented to all that the word of God charged on you. And you longed to be helped. Told to confess, you did confess. Told you must be in earnest, you honestly think you laid your whole heart bare before God. You acknowledged everything, and only plead for pardon. You said in your prayer, "O Lord, I am vile, I come to thee ; I plead thy promise that thou wilt not cast me out ; I give myself away in an everlasting surrender ; I leave my soul at the very foot of the cross !" And then you rose from your knees, murmuring, "Oh, I am no better ; I feel just the same as before !"

You saw that you had made a failure. Now, where was the lack ? Simply in the particular of *trust*. You would not take Jesus at his word. He had said, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." So you plead with him. You came unto him, but you insist that he did cast you out after all.

You said—here I am ; and then you drew back. You said—I give myself to thee ; and then you took yourself away again. You trifled with God. You should have left yourself there, and trusted your soul with him, as you said you would. Let me suggest to you where your disappointment was centred. I think I can tell you what you half-expected, half-bargained, on the spot.

If some clear voice had only spoken to you as you kneeled, saying, "Thy sins be forgiven thee ; go in peace," how your heart would have leaped for joy. If you could only have seen Paul's "great light," that would have confirmed you. Or if even some aged min-

A sign wanted.Faith, not sight.

ister had bent over and whispered in your ear, "You are received, I am sure," then you would perhaps have been satisfied, and begun tremblingly to hope. But because you had nothing of this, not even a sign without, or a strange feeling within, that you could make to answer for a sign, you were discouraged. Now, I have three remarks to make about this action of yours, and its result.

In the first place, let me say, I would not have been the minister to tell you of your acceptance, for all the world. For then you would have believed in me, not in the Saviour. No man has any right to say such a thing to you. I have seen those who in revival times will question and direct for a while, and then say to young persons, "All right, you are converted!" and my blood has run cold. They know nothing about it.

In the second place, let me tell you that you never will have any such sign, without or within, to be your confirmation. If God ever gives anything of the sort, it will only be afterward, for your comfort. "We walk by faith, not by sight;" and this would be sight, not faith. God does not deal with men so. He claims that they shall trust him *without* speaking. If you stand off, saying in your heart, I will believe the moment I *feel* accepted, you will never be accepted. You must trust, and ask no favors. Then God will give you what he pleases. And most likely, one day or another, he will give you some token of his love that will aid you; but he never will, if you bargain for it.

Bird-of-paradise.No more anxiety.

Go again then ; do not wait, nor grieve, nor bargain, nor doubt. Do not reply to me, "Oh, I have done all I can over and over again ; and it is of no use." There is one thing you can do, that you never have done yet. You can *trust* the Saviour. So I say again, and keep saying to you, "Only believe."

In the third place, let me say, that if this sign were given you, it would be the most dangerous thing for you that could be conceived. Because then you would trust the sign, and not the Saviour. Perhaps you have read that story of the woman, told in the "Pastor's Sketches," who saw a beautiful bird-of-paradise on a blue globe, and believed it was the evidence God had sent to show her she was born again. Are you surprised to find that when she was asked for her ground of salvation, she had to tell all about that ridiculous dream the very first thing? So would you, if you had any such folly in your mind. And by and by you would wake to the consciousness that only Jesus can save your soul, and you had been deceiving yourself all this time.

When you have given yourself to Christ, leave yourself there, and go about your work as a child in his household. When he has undertaken your salvation, rest assured he will accomplish it, without any of your anxiety, or any of your help. There remains enough for you to do, with no concern for this part of the labor.

Let me illustrate this posture of mind as well as I can. A shipmaster was once out for three nights in a

Shipmaster and pilot.Burden lost.

storm ; close by the harbor, he yet dared not attempt to go in, and the sea was too rough for the pilot to come aboard. Afraid to trust the less experienced sailors, he himself stood firmly at the helm. Human endurance almost gave way before the unwonted strain. Worn with toil, beating about ; worn yet more with anxiety for his crew and cargo ; he was well-nigh relinquishing the wheel, and letting all go awreck, when he saw the little boat coming, with the pilot. At once that hardy sailor sprang on the deck, and with scarcely a word took the helm in his hand. The captain went immediately below, for food and for rest ; and especially for comfort to the passengers, who were weary with apprehension. Plainly now his duty was in the cabin ; the pilot would care for the ship. Where had his burden gone ? The master's heart was as light as a schoolboy's ; he felt no pressure. The pilot, too, seemed perfectly unconcerned ; he had no distress. The great load of anxiety had gone forever ; fallen in some way or other between them.

Now turn this figure. We are anxious to save our soul, and are beginning to feel more and more certain that we cannot save it. Then comes Jesus, and undertakes to save it for us. We see how willing he is ; we know how able he is ; there we leave it. We *let* him do it. We rest on his promise to do it. We just put that work in his hands to do all alone ; and we go about doing something else ; self-improvement, comfort to others, doing good of every sort. He feels no burden.

The pilot needs no help.Leave all to Christ.

What troubled us so, does not trouble him. All we need to do is to hold our confidence firm. What if that captain should keep running up to see if the pilot was still there ; or to offer to help him ; or to make suggestions ; would it not be folly ? So, for us to keep distressing ourselves about salvation when we have given all that work to Christ, is worse than folly ; it is doubting the Saviour, slighting his love, giving up trust in him just as we begin it.

When I find, my inquiring friend, that you are disturbed because you have no word nor sign, although you have asked God to forgive you and give you a new heart, I can only say to you, *trust* him for that. I have two plain reasons : he never told a lie, and he surely said, "Ask whatsoever you will ;" and you have asked of him the very thing he desired most earnestly to give you.

There, then, is the direction found in a word ; yet, oh, how full of meaning it is ! "*Be not afraid ; only believe !*" For "faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

XIV.

PURE RELIGION.

PURE RELIGION, AND UNDEFILED BEFORE GOD AND THE FATHER, IS THIS: TO VISIT THE FATHERLESS AND WIDOWS IN THEIR AFFLICTION, AND TO KEEP HIMSELF UNSPOTTED FROM THE WORLD.
—*James* 1 : 27.

AT first sight this text looks bad. It seems subversive of all our theologies, and ethics also. For it appears really to say to any one, who is anxious about his soul's eternal interests : "Take generous care of poor people, especially of women who have lost their husbands, and of children who have been left orphans ; behave yourself decently ; do as well as you know how to keep from being worldly ; and all will come out right in the end ; you will be saved and safe in heaven."

And that is what the apostle does not think of saying, and it is not true either. A notion so radically wrong is a dangerous thing. It is the staff of a bruised reed, on which if a man lean, it will certainly go into his hand and pierce it.

The fact is, this text of ours is in no respect the simple formula of definition it looks like. It has a profound start, and takes a prodigious reach. And the only way to compass the extraordinary height to which it goes, is to climb patiently up the rounds of the ladder one by

Only one religion.A poetic scheme.

one. Let us begin at the beginning, and read its clauses quietly over together ; there is a lesson in each.

I. "Pure religion and undefiled." Stop, now, just there. The first proposition found in the verses is this :
THERE CAN BE ONLY ONE TRUE PERSONAL RELIGION FOR THE HUMAN SOUL.

1. Some argue for a mere intellectual scheme of belief. They would rest everything upon a certain fixed group of articles of faith and practice. Here is where our denominational systems come in. Sects may have some advantages, but the bearing of them does not seem to be in this direction certainly. What sort of difference does it make as to my visiting the widows and fatherless of a given neighborhood, whether I have been baptized in one way or in another, whether I was ordained by the laying on of hands of one person or three ? The Christian religion *has* a creed of doctrines, and *has* a code of morals ; but it *is* a life. And in the end it will be found, most likely, that the Lord has had his own people scattered around a good deal from first to last.

2. Some persistently press a mere poetic scheme of humane sympathy. There are many persons one meets constantly in this soft and cultured age, whose religious life might be covered with a single word ; it consists of an amiable, vague kind of morality. It begins with a sigh, "Oh, I wish I could be good !" It continues with a song, "Nearer, my God, to thee !" But it feels no sense of sin, and confesses none ; so it generally rejects

Goodishness.Mere philanthropy.

need of an atonement. It seems just a sweet, deep *goodishness*.

3. Some would urge upon us a mere routine scheme of ritual. This is little more than sentiment become artistic, devotion transmuted into devoteeism. Emotion is externalized into forms and ceremonies. It luxuriates in festivals and fasts. With intricate taste it chooses colors of vestments and fashions of robes. And by and by it exhausts its feeble little force in fierce discussion as to whether the prayers of a penitent people would be offered better in a service in D minor or in E flat.

4. Some seek to present us with an ascetic scheme of moral observance. Of course, at its highest development, this ends in the cell of a hermit, and the white veil of a nun. But as we meet it in ordinary life, it goes not much farther than rigor of law—an iron rule of obedience to precept—and a strict treasuring of tradition. A man says he purposes to keep the Sabbath as his father did before him; at all events, his children shall; at any rate, they shall keep still. And it all seems to amount to pretty much the same thing. Religion is *holding-in*.

5. Some insist on a scheme of mere philanthropy and benevolence. One can hardly wonder that many a man grows confused and stumbles among such varying systems; and, after a feeble inquiry, settles back upon the conclusion that kindness, liberality, and neighborly offices, are about as near religion as anything else. If such people knew there was a verse like ours in the

Who shall decide?

Jehu and Jehonadab.

Bible, they would flaunt it as the very motto on their banner—till they learned what it meant.

II. How is a man to choose? Who shall decide when all differ so? That leads us on a step, and we return again to the text. "Pure religion, and undefiled before God and the Father, is this." The next proposition may be stated thus:—THE STANDARD OF REFERENCE, UP TO WHICH ALL RELIGION MUST BE BROUGHT, IS DIVINE.

1. It will not do to settle it by the opinion of others. No man's personal piety can be registered according to the estimate which even his best friends or worst enemies have of it. Yet, we must reach some sort of adjustment in our association with each other; that is true. It is reported of Chalmers, that while listening to the converse of McCheyne and Burns and the Bonars, and hearing them say, "Precious Jesus" so much, he exclaimed, "A most excellent brotherhood of men, if only they might have done with their *nursery endearments!*" We call all of them—Chalmers and the rest—the saintliest of God's people; but to them he appeared hard, and to him they appeared soft, yet they bore with each other. Thus wrote Wesley, quoting the cheerful conversation between Jehonadab and Jehu: "'Is thine heart right, as my heart is with thy heart? If it be, give me thine hand.' I do not mean, Be of my opinion; thou needest not; neither do I mean, I will be of thine opinion; I cannot. Let all opinions alone; give me thine hand."

2. Nor will it do that one's religion be settled by him-

Self-deception.The Lord is judge.

self. The verse in connection with our text gives a somewhat pertinent warning. "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain." Here comes out the doctrine that one may seem to be religious—may thus deceive his own heart—and in the end his religion prove to be valueless. Thousands of years ago, the wisest person that ever lived, declared, "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." Any one can easily make a foolish and perilous mistake, just by thinking more highly of himself than he ought to think, and so be lost.

3. All this matter must be, and certainly will be, settled by God's opinion, and none other whatsoever. No less authority than that of an inspired apostle has put on record this compact statement of the whole truth: "But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment; yea, I judge not mine own self: for I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord." The instrument employed by divine wisdom is clearly made known beforehand to us all. Up to the unerring and unequivocal statements of God's word are we to bring all our maxims, all our experiences, all our activities, all our creeds. If any man, young or old, wishes to "cleanse his way," he is to "give heed thereto, according to the word." Conscience is regal and supreme; but conscience must be educated and enlight-

The Word tests.

The weak and lonely.

ened by inspiration. "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

III. We are ready to read on now somewhat further in the text. "Pure religion, and undefiled before God and the Father, is this: To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction." That is enough, and the new thought runs thus: THE TEST OF ALL TRUE PERSONAL RELIGION MAY BE FOUND IN CARE FOR THE WEAK AND LONELY.

I. The *subjects* of Christian charity mentioned here are typical as well as specific. One mighty question presses on this age of ours—what shall the strong do for the weak? Out of all classes of feeble people, the unprotected, and the helpless, God has chosen for our notice widows and orphans. The most trying condition in this world is brought to mind. A woman from whom has been taken the staff and stay of her life, is one of the most pitiable objects of human sympathy. She has all the wounded feeling which any other mourner has, and yet is constrained to repress it. And beyond even that, she has the practical prospect of dubious self-support in the future. And a lonely mother, with fatherless children, is not only a living appeal for assistance and succor, but a thorough and exhaustive type, by which to teach the lesson that a true man's piety must be tested by the care he accepts for others.

2. But when is this duty binding? That brings out the *occasion*. The text says, "in their affliction," that is, in the time of it, and in the place of it. Our help must be given when our help is needed. Consider times of narrowness, of panic, of business depression, as offering special occasion.

Then the poor are poorer than ever. And yet then our craven, greedy human nature is most inclined to run to cover. People begin to retrench, because of close markets; but who feel close markets the most? When it seems as if we had nothing to spare; when all time of leisure is exhausted; when one's brain is heavy with overwork; then our first impulse is to draw aside from labor among the poor. But the slenderest philosophy ought to be enough to show that these are the very occasions above all others when the need is most pressing. What we feel some, the poor feel more.

What if some cautious sailor on a vessel of relief, as they drift near a sinking wreck, should coolly reply, when the captain ordered him into the life-boat, "It is always hard enough to go out in the water to save people; to-night the sea is stormier than usual; it is really dangerous to think of leaping overboard *now*; these billows are extraordinarily high; the air is chilly, too; and then, look! the ocean is positively full of drowning men and women; folks say that drowning females will drag one right under most thoughtlessly; it is dreadful to think of it; why do not people shipwreck themselves in the daytime, and in warm weather, and in quiet oceans?

Jonathan's staff.

The word "visit."

It is as much as any wise seaman can do now to take care of himself, and keep ordinarily comfortable till the storm slacks somewhat !”

3. The *method* of bestowing help is next in order, and is all found in one word of the text, “visit.” That cannot mean mere contribution of money ; it means personal contact with those we hope to benefit. So plain a statement allows of no sort of evasion. It signifies *going to see* widows and fatherless under their roofs, if they have any ; in the street, in the by-ways and hedges, wherever they are to be found. The vexed question of societies is up at once for discussion, but we cannot go into it now. It was never expected that Christians would hand bread to each other as Jonathan ate honey off the end of a staff. The primal purpose of the gospel was to render men brothers of the same great household.

“Ye are living epistles, known and read of all men.” It is not expected that the poor will be satisfied with a general copy of the epistles, lithographed for promiscuous distribution. The one grand obstacle to all proper endeavor is found at the present day in the actual withdrawal of living heart from living heart in mutual acquaintance and interest. Men discharge that wonderful word—*visit*—in mere reluctant substitution of dead coin in benefaction. Thus the poor grow greedy and thankless, and the rich harden in selfish ease.

4. But how far in such matters is one expected really to go ? That inquiry is answered in our text also ; the

The fatherhood of God.

"Unspotted."

measure of obligation is quite clear. The singular expression in the early part of the verse finds its explanation just here. The term "Father" answers to the term "fatherless." That may be a reason why the two names "God and the Father," are joined together, as if they specified two persons. The significant lesson is taught us that religion is to be tested by feeling for the fatherless, and the feeling is to be measured by the fatherhood of God!

Now, I would be willing, if challenged seriously, to put Christianity to proof on that! Where is the man who has ever been, in philanthropy, or humanitarian effort, a parent to the poor, with a fatherly care and patience and persistence to be measured by the fatherhood of the Father of Lights!

IV. Only on one condition can this ever be done; this is found in the final clause of the text. See now how all the clauses come in together. "Pure religion, and undefiled before God and the Father, is this: To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." Here is our last lesson to-day: PERSONAL RELIGION DEMANDS THE ENTIRE SURRENDER AND SEPARATION OF THE SOUL TO CHRIST.

"Unspotted from the world." Oh, how much that means! No self; no waiting for applause; no expectation of return; all this is of the world, worldly, and the true religion will have none of it. Of course, then, we all see this entire verse is addressed to Christians. Only thus can it be counted a definition. The text says

that religion, "pure and undefiled," is for a converted man ; for an unconverted man it says nothing. But another text says, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." His duty is to repent of his sins, and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ ; then it is his duty to care for the poor and weak. Humanitarianism has nothing it does not borrow from religion. Success in all its enterprises would be secured better, the moment the soul of the worker puts on Christ as a penitent believer. Duty demands the new life by the cross. Has this ever been done? Yes. Almost, at any rate, by many fine sweet lives in history. Some few, even in Sardis, there were, who did not defile their garments. And at all events, one noble life there has been that fulfilled every condition. Jesus Christ set the example. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

Will there be no end to this? Is a man's work for the poor never to be met? Is the contribution-box an immortal institution in the churches? Ah, just here comes out the profoundest teaching of the gospel! No end can there be ; "The poor ye have with you always." And he who puts on Christ, puts on also the burden of Christ. You will remember this the better, perhaps, if you rehearse the mediæval legend once more, the story of Christopheros.

He was a giant man of Canaan, Offero by name. He wanted to serve the strongest leader in the world, and found a mighty king, who took him in his army. One

“For the dear Lord’s sake.”Christopheros.

day the king’s minstrel sang for his master, and when he happened to mention the name of *Satan*, the listening monarch crossed himself as if in fear. Offero saw it, and left his service, seeking Satan. Oh, soon enough he found him, with his great train of war, and lust, and pestilence, devastating all the world ! He became Satan’s soldier. And yet he perceived Satan would not be forced ever to march up a road where stood a shrine with the infant Jesus in it. So he left that service, seeking for Jesus. He could not find him. But an old hermit said, “Go down by the river, and ferry the weak and weary across.” So he labored season after season, saying all the time, “For the dear Lord’s sake ; will he never come to me !” And one night it stormed, and he heard the voice of a little child, “Come, carry me over !” He went forth. How the wind blew, and the water roared ? But he lifted the little one—oh, most beautiful boy—on his shoulder, and entered the stream. He staggered at the second step. He just managed to get to the other bank. “O my child,” exclaimed he, “who art thou ?” And the child answered him, “I am Jesus.” But the burly giant continued, “Yet why so heavy, for it seemed to me thou wouldst have borne me off my feet !” Then the beautiful boy held down his hand with a great *globe* in its little palm : “There,” he said, “see what you carried ! *He who bears the Lord Jesus on his heart, bears also the world Jesus holds on his hand !*” Then he called Offero, Christopheros, which means Bearer of Christ.

XV.

FAITH WORKING BY LOVE.

FOR IN JESUS CHRIST NEITHER CIRCUMCISION AVAILETH ANY THING,
NOR UNCIRCUMCISION; BUT FAITH WHICH WORKETH BY LOVE.—
Galatians 5: 6.

A GREAT many bewildered persons have asserted, first and last, that the apostle Paul was in violent theological conflict with the apostle James. For he seems to say that a man can be justified by faith only, and without works at all. While James says that faith without works is dead, and a man may be justified by works, and not in absolutely every case is he justified by faith only.

Now, all truth is consistent. These inspired men never meant to come into collision in their views. Their strong language must be interpreted with some intelligible limitation in order to avoid even seeming contradiction. James wrote for a class of persons in his day who had been wont to dwell overmuch on the more spiritual features of religion, and so forget the more practical. He, therefore, intends through all his epistle to bring into prominence the necessity of living up to one's professions of piety, even in minor moralities. Paul, on the other hand, writing to a very different class of persons, who were continually in danger of throwing their whole

Paul and James.David's counsel.

dependence upon a pharisaical performance of mere punctilios of outward duty required by law, was constrained to turn the force of his address more directly upon deep experimental elements of piety, and give them new pictures of heart-service in the inner life.

Hence the entire statements of both these men are right. Religion is not a faith distinct from works, nor works separate from a faith. It includes and demands each of these, and both at once.

It will command acceptance instantly, then, when one urges that every true life needs these two elements ; but it might give a measure of quiet surprise to assert in the same breath that yet there is necessary something quite beyond both faith and works for the completion of the whole pattern set before us in Christ.

Personal religion consists of *three* things in one. There is in it a form of intelligence, first ; then there is in it a form of activity ; then there is in it a form of feeling. Hence it covers in each case the whole manhood—the head, the hand, and the heart.

Very frequently the word of God, in its artless and colloquial language, speaks of one of these elements as if it embraced all the rest. Texts can even be found in which two of them are put in place of the three. Once, at least, in the Old Testament are they all three included. David gave this as dying counsel for his son : “ And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind : for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all

Three elements.

Belief and trust.

the imaginations of the thoughts : if thou seek him, he will be found of thee ; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off forever." Here we find all elements assumed : "know" God, and "serve" him with a "perfect heart." That is, piety demands a creed, a work, and a sentiment.

In the New Testament, also, we find one fragment of a verse so felicitous and terse that it might well become a motto for Christian living : "Faith which worketh by love." All three elements are included here likewise—intelligence, activity, and affection.

Unfortunately for absolute clearness, the word "faith" has been used in the Bible somewhat ambiguously. I do not suppose we are to understand James as referring to a creed only, when he puts the sharp question, "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works ? Can faith save him ?" But I feel sure that he does not refer to an experience only. Perhaps it would be safe to say that he uses the term generically, and seeks to include *trust* as a living bond of union to Christ, and *belief* as an instrument for the intelligent apprehension of truth in its due relations.

At any rate, to be religious each man must have some creed. Certainly he must know and believe that there is a God ; and he must understand his character as a just as well as a beneficent being ; then he must become acquainted with God's law, as holy and decisive, reaching to the inmost intents of the heart ; and then, far above

Faith must "work."

James' "pure religion."

everything else, he must be forced to see plainly that—out of his sovereign grace—God has opened a way of pardon through an atoning death of his own Son. These must be known as primal truths under the gospel ; then they must be believed, and that is *faith*.

Hence, next to this comes activity : faith must "work." The earliest instinct of a redeemed soul is that of the converted apostle : "Lord, what wilt thou have me do?" We have duties to do which involve worship of God, labors for men, and improvement of a spiritual life in ourselves ; these demand energy and zeal. We are to keep up a filial communication with God. Then we are bidden to seek our neighbor's good : feeding the poor by the wayside ; succoring the feeble ; comforting the troubled ; cheering the discouraged ; in a word, giving a warm hand and a sympathetic ear to every voice of human sorrow, every call of human need. Just so we owe our own selves something. We are bound to grow in grace ; and that implies study, discipline, and cultivation. With all these, we must guard against contamination of worldliness. It is as if saints were daily dressed in whitest raiment, and were forced to pass through the dinginess and dust of a defiled roadway. We are to keep these garments of grace fastidiously pure ; to protect them against the falling flakes and drifting ashes. Hence we come back exactly to another verse of James, which may go alongside of Paul's motto. Faith working by love is pure religion ; and "Pure religion, and undefiled before God and the Father, is this,

Must be some sensibility.The Master's spirit.

To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."

Now, I am persuaded that the link between these two elements, faith and works, is found in that other element, *feeling*. Faith alone is not enough. Faith working is not enough. Faith is to continue working by love. And that is enough, simply because it is all there is of it. There must be some sensibility, some tenderness, some emotion, some mellowness of heart, in all personal religion, or it will be chill and lifeless and unattractive. It will neither honor God, nor win men, nor fit us for heaven. This must be what James means when he says, "faith without works is *dead*." And it all grows easy to understand, if we go right along in order. Faith is necessary to salvation, and works are necessary to faith; so, of course, there is a sense in which works are necessary to salvation; for faith without works would be defective and lifeless.

It would seem as if a true Christian could not possibly live a moment without experiencing the promptings of these new feelings within. Satisfied that God is faithful, and that Christ is in earnest, the believer imbibes his Master's spirit. He enters into an actual joyous repose of soul. All his powers are reduced to obedience to law and are working under rules of harmony and naturalness. He has suddenly come back to spiritual health; and, like all convalescents, feels generous and agreeable, glad to meet and to make a world full of friends. Sin is forgiven and the curse removed from

The stormless sky.Symmetry in religion.

his soul. There may be a few clouds of old wrath still hanging over his head ; but the storm is in full retreat, and the thunders already growing distant are no longer for him to hear. And through many a little rift among their folds his eye at times gains glimpses of the pure, blue, stormless sky beyond them. Now and then, there comes a ray of serene sunshine, so warm and fresh, so bright and gladdening, that he lifts his heart in child-like greeting unto him who sent it, and thankfully murmurs, "My Lord and my God !"

The thing seems almost inconceivable, therefore, that there should anybody try to cherish a faith which is all intellectuality, or an activity which is all bustle, or a love which is all gushing. For the symmetry of real religion is its most noble characteristic. Such a man as it necessitates will be all the more a *man* because of its possession. There will be in him no mere cold, crispy orthodoxy ; though he certainly will have a faith. There will be in him no stiffness of routine or ritual drill ; though he certainly will be found working in worship. There will be in him no soft sentimentalism that exhausts itself in singing ; though he will joy quietly in the Lord when the day's labor is over. But there will be in him a living personality of the indwelling Christ.

It is awful for men to pervert piety into pressure, and turn grace into grip ; and no sanctimoniousness of unctuous talk can apologize for it. Pure, sweet sunshine in God's vineyard was never intended to dry up and harden

The work of a vine.Sailor saving men.

the vines into wire, as if their whole autumn work consisted in climbing a trellis or strangling a tree. It is meant to swell out fresh buds and broaden new branches ; to warm up the leaves and render more succulent the tendrils ; and by and by, in the time thereof, to kindle the clusters with luminous purple, and flash their mysterious juices into wine.

Indeed, indeed, what this poor, lost, weary world needed, on the night when the Bethlehem angels sang, was not so much Christianity as it was Christ ! And what this waiting, wistful race wants here and needs to-day is not so much a religion as it is some religious men ; not so much Christ in creed and Christ in miracle, as it is Christ in love, Christ in life, whole, human, and humane !

Let us look now for a picture that shall exhibit results, as this true religion pushes itself out into realization. What shall be our simile ? What sort of life would that be which mingles in proper proportion faith and works, and makes faith work by love ?

Let us suppose a sailor on the beach seeking to bring ashore passengers from a wrecked ship. He is protected by a rope fastened around his waist, and held firmly by some one behind him.

Let us imagine a miner at the edge of a shaft, determined to rescue some of his comrades down underground, stifling in the fire-damp. He bends over the awful chasm safely, for there is a rope under his arm-pits, which is fastened securely to the windlass behind.

The rope of faith.Working actually.

Let us think of a fireman upon a ladder, from which he seeks to be swung over into the window of a blazing house, in order just to snatch a child out of the flames before they mount to the attic. He is girded by a rope, held by the people behind him on the neighboring roof, so as to keep him in case the floor is swept away.

Simple pictures all of these, the peculiarities of which are the same—a dangerous service and a secured help. You see how I must insist upon the *rope* as quite the main thing to start with.

This is the *faith* we have been talking about. In all spiritual exposures, the Christian relies on a strength not his own. Every human being that goes forth after a soul is held by a man just behind him ; and that man here is Jesus Christ. And the simple difference between Christian life and all other life lies in this—a Christian life exists, acts, and grows entirely by a living faith.

With this hint, cannot even the youngest child go straight on with the analysis of the motto ? *Works* come next to faith ; the mere glance at our pictures will tell where those enter. The sailor stands on the beach-rock, the miner stands on the shaft-edge, the fireman stands on the ladder-rung ; but standing is not working. What would you have these people do ? You answer easily. Let that sailor forget himself, trust the rope, plunge into the water, and every instant catch hold of some new swimmer, struggling in his agony. Let that miner set loose the clog on the windlass, trust the rope, and rattle down into the depths with a leap for life from ledge to

Gentleness.Wistful, pitiful love.

ledge, looking for smothering men. Let that fireman wait not a moment, but trust the rope, spring through the shivered glass of the chamber, and be off on his errand in the smoke. No time is to be lost. It is no boys' play this ! nor is saving souls boys' play.

And then comes the *love*—oh, word of inexhaustible meaning ! That demands tenderness and anxiety, brave deed, and cool purpose. Look over at our pictures again. Let that sailor be on his guard, as he grasps any one in the water by the necklace or the hair. So let that miner fold his arms gently around the form of his old comrade. He could bear buffets and banter once ; but he is not in condition now. Kept carefully and touched kindly, he may yet breathe again. Let that fireman cover his coat over the young child's nostrils ; nor, however he may feel his own flesh shrivel in the heat, suffer one tongue of flame so much as to curl the hair on its forehead. For all these human beings, you see, are down now to barest existence ; but they are still *alive*, and must be treated tenderly.

Can we not discern, then, where the lack is in most of these modern types of religion ? Our lack is not so much in the element of intelligence as in the other two, feeling and activity ; and in feeling most of all. There seems a want of earnest, wistful, pitiful love for the souls of our fellow-men. There is too little delicate sympathy for human weakness in our clumsy effort to relieve it. We do not respect the solemn reserves of each soul as we push, in the presence of others, the

Kissing a shadow.Unromantic duties.

probes of our questioning into its wounds. Souls are solitary when they wrestle with God's angel. They do not give their trust easily, and never unless they know it is to a true friend.

Remember that some of us have supreme advantage in this respect. "God is love ; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." That is true for all, and yet not every one sees it. "And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us." Oh, yes! we have *known* and *believed* God's love ; but men who hear only rough, quick words from our lips cannot believe in ours. We must make them reach confidence in the sincerity of our affection by supreme endeavor of patient forbearance and regard. Think of the faith that old Crimean soldier had in Florence Nightingale, when he lifted his aching body up just to kiss her shadow as it suddenly ran along the wall !

Oh, we need men—need them now supremely—ready for great, plain, unromantic duties ! We are in deplorable lack of men and women, who love God with all their hearts, and who love their fellow-men as they do themselves. We need men and women whose souls grow fresher and younger, each time they come to the Lord's table. This age of ours, cold and uncompromising, thoroughly disrespectful and suspicious of all shams, demands a new piety ; a piety frank in rebuking sin and firm in resisting it, but tender and merciful when it seeks to lift the man who is defiled by it. It clamors now for no singular or dramatic experiences of conversion,

The world's demand.Satisfied at last.

least of all a something called a second conversion. He who is the meekest of saints for the kingdom of heaven, he who is the surest to enter heaven, may not at all be the one who has the most graphic story to tell of conviction and wrestle, succeeded by some disclosure of sunshiny and bird-singing peace afterward; nor he who has the longest and most voluble formulas of prayer to rehearse on sudden public call. It is possible that it may be even that unsuspected believer who trusts Christ in the humblest way, dependent on him for pardon, and he whose whole life is milder and mellow as he moves patiently on toward its end and crown.

Indeed, we come back to the point at which we started; there is no getting beyond it. The poor, perplexed world says it will be satisfied only with a *faith* which *worketh* by *love*.

XVI.

THE SWEAT OF BLOOD.

AND BEING IN AN AGONY, HE PRAYED MORE EARNESTLY: AND HIS SWEAT WAS AS IT WERE GREAT DROPS OF BLOOD FALLING DOWN TO THE GROUND.—*Luke 22 : 44.*

THE theme for study next offered is stated thus: "Suffering saints find comfort in Christ." He is called "The Perfect Pattern;" and we are assured, in the passage chosen from one of Simon Peter's epistles, that by following him closely we shall return unto "the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls." (1 Peter 2 : 19-25.)

I judge that a single incident in our Saviour's career may be made to serve a more effective purpose than any general rehearsal of the whole of it. And I choose for detailed consideration his agony in the garden of Gethsemane.

The apostle announces the principle that suffering is actually welcome so as to be worthy of thanks, on three conditions: it is to be gained conscientiously, endured patiently, and inflicted unjustly. For this was the form of Jesus' trials; they came upon him in our behalf, and as our pattern, and for our emulation.

The particulars he holds up as specially designed for our imitation are our Lord's sinlessness and sincerity, his patience and self-control, his courage and unbroken

Christ our pattern.Physical pain.

trust. All these are seen in their highest degree as he kneels beneath the olives in the garden, just before he is betrayed. "For this is thank-worthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For even hereunto were ye called : because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps : who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth : who, when he was reviled, reviled not again ; when he suffered, he threatened not ; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously."

The sight of moral disease affects the ordinary human mind less than that of mental ruin ; and either of these makes less impression than that of mere physical pain. One who passes through the wards of a hospital becomes burdened and feverish with overstrained feeling. He would have much less oppression in an insane asylum, and would return with a kind of curious interest after a visit to a jail. Perhaps this suggests a constitutional reason why the church at large dwells so much on the bodily sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is easy to appreciate the pain of a nailed hand, a pierced side, or a transfixed foot. Hence, the most morbid and even shocking pictures of the crucifixion scene are half welcomed by many a mystic devotee, who magnifies and measures the love of his Saviour by the pangs he endured, the lacerations and wounds.

The scene, introduced to us by the verse in the gospel, is calculated always to attract attention. It will re-

The ancient collect.Luke, a physician.

ward our severest study. But we shall find ourselves confronted with a form of anguish unshared, unparalleled, and unexplained. There is mystery in the details of its description; in the circumstances of its occurrence; in even the fact of its record. Oh, how little we know of what we so often call Christ's "agony in the garden!"

I. THERE IS MYSTERY IN THE DETAILS OF ITS DESCRIPTION.

One venerable collect there is, found in an ancient liturgy, which it becomes us reverently to offer here, as we begin our investigations:—"Almighty God, who calledst Luke the physician, whose praise is in the gospel, to be an evangelist, and physician of the soul; may it please thee, that, by the wholesome medicines of the doctrine delivered by him, all the diseases of our souls may be healed; through the merits of thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

1. The single writer.—The history of this part of our Saviour's anguish is recorded by only one of the evangelists. Neither Matthew, Mark, nor John makes any allusion to a sweat-like blood in Gethsemane. It may not go very far in explanation of this strange fact, but it can be stated for what it is worth, and probably will help some minds, that Luke, who narrates this extraordinary circumstance, was a physician by profession, and in many instances in his gospel, discoverable by comparing it with the others, shows his observation of matters

"As it were."Did Jesus sweat blood?

peculiar to his calling. It is certain that this particular in the garden-suffering of Jesus would powerfully arrest his imagination, and impress his remembrance.

2. The singular language.—Our version of Luke's story is positively accurate. Let us read it over again :—"His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." This formula of comparison, thus used, deserves close notice. The verse does not say that Jesus sweat blood, but that what he did sweat was like drops of blood falling. The same word I have counted as occurring thirty-four times in the New Testament. In six instances it is translated "like;" in seven, "as;" in eighteen, "about;" in two, "as it had been;" in one—this one here—"as it were." Luke knows his own term; and he says the Holy Ghost was like a dove, and that Stephen's face was as it had been the face of an angel; that is, each of these seemed so; for the same adverb is used there as here. Indeed, in no passage in all the New Testament does the expression "like," or "as it were," signify fact; it merely means resemblance. Shall we, then, assert that Jesus did not shed the traditional blood-sweat in his agony? No; not necessarily. But we ought not to be dogmatic about it. It seems inexplicable that Luke should mention blood at all, if there was no real blood to speak of. Drops of perspiration are just as specific, graphic, picturesque as any other drops, if only force of style was what he wanted. It is better to understand that, mingled with the profuse moisture upon Jesus' person,

Sleeping for sorrow.The third prayer.

there came forth, under a stress of new agony, the stain of real blood, falling on the ground.

II. THERE IS MYSTERY IN THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THIS OCCURRENCE.

We shall see this if we note the exact time of it, the immediate occasion of it, the rare nature of it, and the exhaustive violence of it.

1. *The Time*.—It is most touching and pitiable to see our lonely Lord going to and from the slumbering disciples, backward and forward, restless and unsatisfied, as the hours pass wearily on. How little they knew of his trial! Again and again he prayed. The disciples surrendered; nobody tells us why but Luke. He drew from his own experience as a professional man the fact that sympathy is very wearing, and urges to drowsiness. So he adds, charitably: "He found them sleeping for sorrow." Thus they lay heavily on the sward, and that burdened Redeemer walked alone amid the shadows, ever, as before, going "a little further" under their gloom. Yet this would not do. He must have a word, a look, a sign, from his Father's throne. Just in the line of incident, then, comes this phenomenon. It was connected with the third prayer.

2. *The Occasion*.—Two prayers had seemingly failed thus far, except inasmuch as they bore by reflex action on Jesus' personal experience. He had not yet in exact answer received his request. Girding himself anew then for a still mightier exercise of faith, submission,

Growth in submission.A misconception.

and importunity, he knelt upon the sward. Then nature gave way. In the stress of that strong supplication, the natural barriers of blood were rended, and his sweat was tinged.

We cannot fail, therefore, to connect this rupture with the act of prayer. "Being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly." The expression means more intensely, more strenuously. The singularity of this form of statement lies in the implication it evidently makes that Jesus could be less earnest at one time than another in his prayers. It represents him as actually growing in the experience of submitting his will to his Father's. There is no force nor fixedness in language if this narrative does not teach that he discovered there was need of greater vehemence in spiritual fervor than that with which he had begun to pray.

We must drop our preconceived notions of a mere theanthropic Messiah here, and accept the picture of a historic Jesus. It is plain that our Saviour entered Gethsemane with a wish in his mind which was not in accordance with his Father's will. In expressing it, he remained, as ever, sinless, for he had no purpose which he meant to carry out into wilfulness. All this time, however, he was putting his will at school. It cost him a conflict which he had never before experienced. Call that "cup" what you please; he distinctly asked to be permitted to decline it, and only after severe struggle acquiesced—"Thy will, not mine." This must be the plain reference of that tremendous passage in the epistle

"He learned obedience."Charles IX.

to the Hebrews, where we are told concerning Jesus, that "in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered."

3. *The Nature*.—But the moment the spirit became willing, it was evident that the flesh was weak. What the mind can do in its regnant power over the body has never been fully tested for record. The trouble is, the register breaks in the moment of measurement. We can hardly understand this curious effect of Jesus' distress upon him. The medical books, we are told, are not without authentic instances of strong mental emotions having bent and broken the physical frames of men. The cases are rare, but by no means unknown; and one historic illustration has never been denied. It is recorded that Charles the Ninth, of France, was, upon his death-bed, so overcome by pangs of remorse under the awful recollection of the Saint Bartholomew massacre he had ordered, that his blood was actually driven through the pores of his skin, and stained the linen on which he lay. So that we need not regard the small cavils of those who declare the record incredible, even if taken in the most literal way. Sweat of blood is not frequent, certainly; but it cannot be called impossible.

4. *The Violence*.—There can be no doubt, at all events, of the physical effect of this exhaustion upon Jesus.

This sweat of blood remains as the highest evidence

Celestial succor.A mysterious record.

to show the rending laceration, the unfathomable depths, and the awful extremity of that hour's pain. He broke down utterly and irretrievably under it. A necessity arose for divine interposition and succor, or he could not go on. "There appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him."

Now, it might be expected that at this point there would be a mystery. Who was this angel? What did he do? No other evangelist even mentions the occurrence. Some excellent people have been stumbled to think that an angel—a created being—should be sent to help the Creator. Here is a silly misconception again. Our Lord laid aside so much of his divine nature and glory as was necessary for him to become fairly resident in a human being, "a little lower than the angels." And in some way, not explained to us, that radiant messenger renewed Jesus' strength, recruited his exhausted frame, and raised him from his otherwise fatal exhaustion.

III. THERE IS MYSTERY IN THE FACT THAT THIS RECORD WAS MADE.

We reach our highest wonder at this point. Three questions meet us in the same breath. When was this record put in the Bible? How was it put in? Why was it put in?

1. When was it put in? For the singular fact confronts us that it is not in—neither this verse nor the one which precedes it—in many of the old manuscript cop-

The verse genuine.How did Luke know?

ies of this gospel. Some of our ablest commentators doubt whether it really belongs in the New Testament at all. They simply reject the story.

All this seems rash and uncalled for. Of course we readily understand why any ancient transcriber should be tempted to leave these verses out from the few copies where they are missing; it may have seemed to him, perhaps, that such a story of utter humiliation dishonored the Son of God. But nobody could understand why a transcriber should invent so preposterous a thing, and thrust it into the many copies where it appears. Hence the last critics have no hesitancy in holding that all the record is authentic, just as genuine as any other part of the gospel Luke has given us.

2. How was it put in? That is, how did Luke know about so extraordinary a phenomenon as this? Matthew and John were among the immediate disciples of our Lord. And the hazardous conjecture has been made that Mark was that "young man" whom he himself alone mentions, who followed Jesus "with a linen cloth cast about his naked body." But nobody has ever gone further than to offer a proofless suggestion that Luke may have been one of those who met our Saviour on the journey to Emmaus. And even the wild remark is on record that possibly the marks of the blood-drops would be visible after the termination of the agony! But no scholarly argument can be held for an instant to show that this evangelist ever set his eyes upon Jesus' face, or ever visited Gethsemane before the

Why related ?

Christ's example.

resurrection. Luke was Paul's physician, and his history comes later. The quickest explanation is decidedly the best, and the only one. The facts were communicated to these inspired writers, as the facts of the creation were communicated to Moses, or the facts about Cyrus to Isaiah. "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

3. Why was it put in ? Here we reach the main question, the most momentous and most far-reaching mortal lips can ask. To human comprehension this hour of garden-agony is the one awful thing of the Bible. If there can be another wonder deeper than this, that Jesus should be humiliated so, it is that all the ages should be told of it. Why was not this pain and shame covered up from mortal gaze with a decorous darkness like that which veiled the corresponding agony on the cross ? Why send the curious eyes of men peering among the shadows of Gethsemane, that they might report such conflict of Immanuel, when he was at the lowest ? Now for one, I would hush my voice, and cover my face, in utter abandonment, if there had not been put on my lips an answer by inspiration itself.

Listen to these words : "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps." What Jesus endured on the cross lies between him and his Father, and may well be covered up. What he endured in the moonlight in the garden lies between him and us, and we have a lesson to learn from it. He was showing how a human will, which it was possible to set

"Our infirmities."

"Yet without sin."

against the divine, could be subdued into submission to it. It was a lesson for every tempted man. Hence the declaration, "For verily he took not on him the nature of angels ; but he took on him the seed of Abraham." "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same." Immanuel was "God with us ;" not a divine soul in a human body merely, but a divine person in a human nature precisely like our own. He could hunger and thirst ; he could burn and shiver ; be weary and feel pain. He took a human nature like Adam's, which was fallible, and could commit sin. That he never did commit any sin was because the human nature he took was supported by the divine. "Himself bare our infirmities." If it had been in every sense impossible for him to be touched by evil passions, or solicited by evil appetites, or agitated by evil ambitions, he would have been no pattern for you and for me.

All that call, in Gethsemane, to his disciples—"Rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation"—would go for nothing, unless there was some apprehension of overthrow in his case that might be paralleled in theirs. He could do all things through the divine nature which strengthened him ; and we can do all things through Christ, who, by his promised Spirit, will strengthen us. He was a man who never sinned ; to show us there could be a man who should never sin. So was he "in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." He assumed our weaknesses and exposures, as well as some

Less help than we.Resist unto blood.

of our succors and defences, just to make us see that these could in all cases offset each other. That is, he entered into our commonplace conflicts to render it eternally clear they could be fought out into triumphs. He had less, indeed, of help than we have ; for have we not his own bright example, his inspiriting encouragements, and his sweet promises ? God has said to each one of us, "I knew that thou art obstinate, and thy neck is an iron sinew, and thy brow brass." It is the office of our life's discipline to bend that sinew of iron, and break that brow of brass.

"Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus." He sweat blood in the garden to teach us that we cannot duly have "considered" him, as long as we "have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin." As in the temptation he proved Satan could be conquered with three tests, so in the agony he proved that human will could be subdued with three prayers.

"Could ye not watch with me one hour ?" On these misimproved hours of heavenly instruction will eventually be lodged some of our saddest regrets if ever we fall into sin. Simon Peter, out in the quadrangle, beside the fire of coals, must have felt one single question of the soldier far more than all the gibes of the maid : "Did not I see thee in the garden with him ?"

But the encouragement is even beyond the admoni-

tion. Would not he, who was willing to suffer, be willing to succor also? So let us pray: "By thine agony and bloody sweat; by thy cross and passion; by thy precious death and burial; by thy glorious resurrection and ascension; and by the coming of the Holy Ghost; good Lord, deliver us!"

So now we come legitimately back from our illustration in the gospel to the lesson in the epistle upon which our study needs to close. We see what the apostle means when he concludes: "For ye were as sheep going astray, but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls."

There are just three homeward steps for every human being entering into the spirit and advantage of our Saviour's suffering. Think what we all once have been: "sheep going astray." See what Jesus now is: "the Shepherd and Bishop" of souls. Come close to him with a hearty "return."

"For thus saith the Lord God, Behold I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out. I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be: there shall they lie in a good fold, and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel. I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord God."

XVII.

SIN CLEANSED BY BLOOD.

THE BLOOD OF JESUS CHRIST HIS SON CLEANSETH US FROM ALL
SIN.—I *John* 1 : 7.

AN interesting story has been related in one of our missionary periodicals concerning a faithful minister now laboring in the foreign field. While traveling once in India, he discovered, in a retired spot by the wayside, a man lying on the earth. Seen at a distance, he appeared to be asleep. He judged him to be one of those singular heathen devotees, so often in that land encountered upon their painful pilgrimages, and supposed that, fatigued with his protracted journey, he had fallen on the ground for rest.

Coming up to him, however, he found that the man was really in a dying state, just breathing his last. Kneeling down by his side, and solicitous to give help or bring comfort to one in such mortal extremity, he put the question in the native language : “ Brother, what is your hope for eternity ? ”

Faintly, but with an expression of delighted surprise, the man replied : “ The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” His strength failed him with the mere repetition of these inspired words ; and in a moment more, the soul of this unknown believer had

The Bengalee convert."Brother, your hope?"

passed out of human sight, and was in the presence of God. Subdued into unutterable emotion at thus suddenly confronting death, there in so secluded a retreat, the missionary gazed upon the lifeless body, silently wondering who this strange fellow-Christian might be. His eye caught a glimpse of a fragment of paper closely clasped in the dead man's hand. On examination, this proved to be a detached leaf of the Bengalee Testament. And on it were traced the words which that Hindoo convert had repeated with trustful reliance, as he floated out alone upon that shoreless sea of eternal existence which rolls all around the world.

There comes an hour to every individual, when that same impressive question must be answered with equal explicitness: "Brother, what is your hope for eternity?" There will be a day when each one of us will withdraw quietly from the dusty road of human travel, and seek some undisturbed spot in which to die. A score of wrong replies may be made then, when it will be too late for a man to make any other. That which the Bengalee believer made is the only safe one; and that has to be understood earlier.

It is a useless thing to assert with persistent vehemence that it matters little or nothing as to what a man believes, provided he is only sincere. It makes a great deal of difference what a man believes. Faith decides character, and character fixes destiny. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." Theory governs life, and life it is that opens the door of eternity.

It was long ago declared possible for human beings, under a strong delusion, to believe a lie. If any one does that, the more sincere he is in it, the worse he is off. Jesus of Nazareth is the one mediator between God and man; so says inspiration: "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." There is one clear way of salvation from sin; there is one relief from the burden of wrath and guilt; but there are not two.

When the apostle John, who generally seems so gentle, breaks out in the strong expression: "If we say that we have not sinned, we make God a liar, and his word is not in us," we are inevitably thrown into consternation. Instinctively we look at the connection of such sentences, to see if we may not have mistaken the meaning. Then we are startled to read again a fresh reiteration of the same statement: "If we say that we have fellowship with God, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth." Such language appears to delicate-minded people somewhat violent and extreme.

Moreover, it awakes opposition. To hear an inspired preacher bandying around those words *lie* and *liar*, which no one in this life takes tamely, seems extravagant. It always surprises us to find an habitually mild man using such rough epithets. But if we are forced to the conviction that he is thoroughly in earnest, and really means what he says, then we forget the speaker in the

A possible mistake.God cannot lie.

violence of the sentiment. We begin stubbornly to deny the charges.

Now here the beloved disciple interposes a single deprecation. He is charitable enough to suppose that no one would condemn us unheard. He allows the supposition of half-innocent *mistake* upon our part. He says: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." But even this does not take off the sharp edge altogether. For we have no notion we are so utterly dull in our self-knowledge; no one admits that he is so miserably deceived as this. The fact is undeniable; most men have no true conviction of personal guilt, such as demands ignorance for an apology, or offers it as an exculpation. At all events, we are not willing meekly to be told that the mere feeling of injustice, which sweeps over us under the extensive condemnation pronounced upon us, is equivalent to flinging back upon the divine Being who made us the accusation of himself bearing false witness. We have no purpose whatever of calling God, our heavenly Father, a *liar*. These swift estimates strike us as offensive and rash, in despite of inspiration. They do certainly, so we insist, overrate the wickedness of our follies and imperfections. They attach too much importance to our mere harmless fretting under heavenly restraints. They inject an unmerited malignity of guilt into simple petulance and caprice of will, which has no intention of positive rebellion.

It is probable that many of us make these two mis-

Actual computation.

"Sin," but not "sins."

takes at once : We do not attempt to *add up the numbers* of our actual transgressions ; and we fail to bear in mind that *non-performance of the right* is the same as the doing of real wrong. So we naturally satisfy ourselves with conclusions that do not come up to the standard of perfectness which the judgment of infinite purity demands. God makes registers which we say are not true. "Every way of a man is right in his own eyes : but the Lord pondereth the hearts."

It becomes evident that all the sacred writers have another criterion than ours, by which they more accurately measure the exact heinousness of human conduct in the sight of a holy God. The fear arises, in every exhibition of men's responsibility for behavior, that many a one will be found who is attempting to pass all particulars by, and take a sweet self-congratulation in confessing generals. He will acknowledge he is a sinner, perhaps. Everybody is. He supposes he may have broken the Decalogue. But you will ask in vain for him to mention the commandment. Sometimes one will admit that he is exposed to the curse of the law. At the same moment, however, he is prepared to make a stand of denial upon each precept in turn. Such a man actually appears sincere. He imagines it is just fair to him to draw a distinction. He may have committed *sin*, but no *sins*. He is defiled, but not exactly blameworthy. He feels pain and weakness, and so owns he has caught a calamity of wickedness, as even the healthiest of men possibly might catch an infectious disease. But he in-

sists that he has lived conscientiously, and has never been a violent transgressor. He merits less censure, having sinned, as it were, only by accident.

Then, further, it seems clear that before we can settle the moral state of any given individual, we shall be compelled to take into consideration his lack of positive obedience and service, as it ought to be registered by the light and the chances he has received. And with most of us, dwelling under the full blaze of the gospel, the case may eventually go hard. In nothing else does sin display its Satanic origin and nature so evidently as in its insidious power of massing itself in and upon a human soul, without that soul's becoming painfully or alarmingly conscious of its baleful presence. This is what constitutes the peculiar "deceitfulness" of transgression, concerning which we are so frequently admonished in the Scriptures. And this is what blinds the eyes most of all against the discovery that doing nothing right is just the same as doing something wrong. "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin."

I honestly and sorrowfully believe there is no person in any intelligent community, informed enough to understand how searchingly the law of God lays hold upon motives and purposes, and all the hidden movements of the mind, who cannot even now recall the day and the hour when his will crossed God's will in an actual experience of speech or of deed, and he determined to have his own way—did have it—and knows now, this very

Old wrongs.Negative sins.

moment, that in that decision and behavior he deliberately sinned against the God of heaven.

To many of us there are faces on earth, living somewhere, near or distant, which we desire never to behold again ; faces, for example, which seen in our business haunts or social circles, and likely to claim old acquaintance with us, would mantle our cheeks with shame. There are tongues, which could speak in some ears only a few words of recollection and recall, that we would give the world rather than have whispered in the presence of those friends who respect us and trust us to-day. Do you suppose King David was the only man that ever lived who could pray, or has prayed, in an abashed wonder at his own disclosed history : "Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions : according to thy mercy remember thou me, for thy goodness' sake, O Lord ?"

Alas for our neglects of duty—our first oath, our foolish dissipation, our bad book read, our filthy story told, our Sabbath broken, our parents disobeyed, our prevarication under the sharp question of an employer, our evil companionship ! And in our riper years—alas for our impulsive yielding to dishonesty, our malicious insinuation undermining the fair fame of another, our acted lie to keep up appearances, our permitted misunderstanding from which came gain to our greed, our quarrels with rivals in trade or competitors in profession, our ungenerous suspicion that rejected old trust, our indignation at fraternal rebukes ! Alas for our wil-

Our ownership in sin.The sea-shell.

ful outbreaks of temper, our miserable jealousies in society, our chicaneries in politics, our covetings of gain, our whisperings of detraction, our word broken when it should have been kept, our word given when it should have been withheld, our wounding speeches to the weak and dependent, our anger at the beggars, our hardness on the poor, our pride, always too unwilling to explain or retract old injustice or heal estrangement! Who is clear in this?

All of these may not be recognized by the same person, but each will remember his own. And the uncomfortable pain they bring arises in no degree against the one who suggests them, for they do not originate with him; they are ours, and ours alone.

You sometimes enter a cabinet of curiosities, and the attendant proffers you a large, beautiful shell. He tells you that, if you put it to your ear, you can hear the moaning of the ocean. It amuses you to make the trial; sure enough, you seem listening to a roar of waves upon the rocks. Your curiosity, however, is most arrested by the fact that you hear the sound only when you grasp the shell yourself. Perhaps a child would imagine that it holds in its recesses memories of the beach it came from. But you inquire, and are now interested to be informed that the noise comes not out of any peculiarity in the shell, but only from the vibration of your own fingers around on the outside of the hollow convolutions, as the tension of the muscles grows tremulous under the pressure. So really, what you hear is not the

The sound in one's ears.

The "life-giver."

ocean at all, but only the beat and pulse of your own busy life.

Bear away with you a profitable thought from this. You hold up God's word close to your ear ; somebody tells you it is full of warning ; you perceive the dull roar of retribution yourself ; you grow pettish if another man presses it harder. But all this while you hear the moaning of a solemn admonition more clearly if you are alone. For what you hear is just *your own heart* growing prophetic of evil, when it listens to the voice of your own life telling its record to your soul. "The wicked man travaileth with pain all his days, and the number of years is hidden to the oppressor. A dreadful sound is in his ears : in prosperity the destroyer shall come upon him."

Now then, what the apostle John says is that there is no use in trying to deny such an impeachment. God charges that we are rebellious sinners, and our hearts accept the sense of guilt. If we refuse to admit it, we are liars ourselves, and are attempting to show that God is also. "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

Scholars tell us that throughout the Peshito Syriac version of the Scriptures, deemed among the most primitive and intelligent, "salvation" is in all cases rendered "life ;" the saved are called the *living* or the *alive* ; the Saviour bears the name of *Mahyono*, or the life-giver. In all this there is a proper recognition of our owing

McCheyne's remark.Carey's epitaph.

everything to Jesus Christ, our surety. We are dead in trespasses and in sins, but our life is hid with Christ in God. "To be awakened," wisely said McCheyne, "we need to know our own hearts ; to be saved, we need to know the heart of Jesus Christ."

Christ is, therefore, a perfect Saviour. Our relief is not found in denying sin, but in accepting him as our redeemer from it. If we plead not guilty, we do not tell the truth. "And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous : and he is the propitiation for our sins : and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

It was the dying request of William Carey, that if a poor sinful creature should merit any word to be said at his funeral, it should be merely to declare that upon his tombstone he wanted this one verse for an epitaph :

"A wretched, poor, and helpless worm,
On thy kind arms I fall ;
My Lord, my life, my sacrifice,
My Saviour, and my all !"

XVIII.

LOVE AS A FORCE.

WE LOVE HIM, BECAUSE HE FIRST LOVED US.—I *John* 4 : 19.

JOHN, the beloved disciple, soon shows himself the loving apostle. Specially, in that remembered passage of his first epistle, near the beginning of the fourth chapter, he pictures a range of experience extending from God to man and from man to his fellow-man, very rare and beautiful, and full of practical suggestion to all who will study it. He shows us love as an embodiment in God, love as a manifestation by God, and love as a force from God.

1. As an embodiment, he puts it thus : "God is love." He tells us, in the outset, that the Creator had cherished an eternal affection and solicitude for fallen man. The next step leads him to say that God had plainly exhibited his interest by his careful providences. Then he passes swiftly and enthusiastically on in a glowing description of the love. Then he begins to laud it ; then he vindicates God's claims for obedience on account of it. Thus advancing constantly, more and more fully under sway of his theme, as he refreshes his own soul with the delights of it, he at last reaches the climax, and in one burst of ascription, whose very simplicity

"God is love."Natural religion.

constitutes its grandeur, he declares, "God is love." A sense of obligation is instantly asserted: "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth, is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love."

Now we are not to suppose he intended to give here an exact definition of the Supreme Being. The almighty Creator is a person, not an attribute. John only takes what he insists to be the chief characteristic of the Deity, and by a bold stroke of rhetoric affirms that he is its perfection and embodiment at the highest.

It is vitally necessary to the success of any system of belief that men shall understand the character of the God who demands worship and service under it. Man is a devotional being, and he will certainly clamor for some religion with all the wistful voices of his entire nature. What that religion will be depends upon one primary conception in his mind; namely, the idea he has of the supreme Jove or Jehovah at the centre and head of it. This it is which gives form to all his reasonings, as well as a reason for all his forms. Let a nation be instructed to think of God as a being of war, and little by little their worship is sure to become martial, and the feelings of their hearts military. Battle-songs will be the anthems on the holy-days, cries for vengeful success will be the prayers, and heroic soldiers will figure as demi-gods. Not unlikely human victims will smoke upon the altars, and bloody trophies will be hung upon the walls of the temples. Men always be-

The idea of God.Projection of attributes.

come like that which they willingly worship. This one idea of God controls the entire race, giving shape to every form of development.

“Think of Buddha,” say the Chinese priests, “and you will grow to resemble Buddha.” So they picture heaven as consisting of a series of tremendous periods of time, divided according to the portions of Buddha’s person. So many years are to be passed in thinking of Buddha’s feet ; so many years in thinking of Buddha’s knees ; so many years in thinking of Buddha’s waist, and of his shoulders, and of his chin, and so on. Their idea of God fashions the whole religion they cherish and the devotional life they live.

Now, we must remember that the Bible teaches us to reverse the usual process by which unregenerate men seek to reach the idea of the Supreme Being. The so-called philosophers and “advanced thinkers” of this world are wont to construct their own deities. They project the attributes of their common nature into infinity, and then group them together, calling that Jove or Jehovah, as it pleases themselves. That is to say, they conceive power, which in a measure human beings possess, to become unlimited ; that makes omnipotence. Then they conceive wisdom, which sages exhibit, to advance into omniscience. So they gather the qualities of the supremely best human nature, augment them and refine them and exalt them until they may suddenly be hurried into personality—and the personage is God. Unfortunately, the result of this process is unequal to the

“An Ethiop’s god.”God’s revelation of himself.

need of one’s soul, because it is the simple creation of one’s soul ; the fountain cannot rise higher than the spring. A conception thus originated partakes of the entire man that starts it, and so universally the productions will vary as the men do.

“An Ethiop’s god hath Ethiop’s lips,
Black cheek, and woolly hair ;
But the Grecian god hath a Grecian face,
As keen-eyed and as fair.”

The New Testament shows us that God prefers to draw his own picture upon the human imagination, and addresses our faith by the disclosure of himself sovereignly in the person of Jesus Christ. So far back as in his gospel, this same evangelist John had written : “No man hath seen God at any time ; the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.” Here, in his epistle, he amplifies and reiterates the thought ; showing that our entire notion of the Supreme Being comes from what he has himself revealed to us from on high : “No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit. And we have seen, and do testify, that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.”

Let it be taken for granted that God is love ; that is, that he is actuated by love, his character is based on love, his law is a law of love, his dealings are in the

The true religion.A religion of love.

highest sense the demonstrations of love, his leanings toward our fallen race are the yearnings of love. Then let it be understood that love becomes the permanent and reigning principle of our being ; and we shall instantly understand the meaning of the verse : "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God."

Suppose, then, there should be openly introduced a religion of gentleness and good-will, fixed unmistakably before all by the plain and characteristic element in it announced in the statement, "God is love." This would give to men love as an active principle of life. A God of love must be worshipped with love. Around him our sympathies would have to be grouped, so that whenever our veneration was to find utterance, or our devotion was to choose a ceremony, it necessarily would exhibit the presence of love as the prevailing spirit, and would show love in all its ritual forms.

That is to say, take this old faith of ours, "the faith once delivered to the saints," as an example of what a religion must be. It is a religion of pure love ; for its Founder said explicitly : "The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel ; The Lord our God is one Lord : and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. This is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these."

2. Next to this consideration of love as an embodiment in God, the apostle presents love as a manifestation by God : "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

There cannot be much advantage in pushing bright historic illustrations as pictures of the supreme, wonderful love of God the creator for his creatures here on the earth. Only mothers can understand the feeling of Mary when Jesus Christ moaned on the cross in the majestic agony of his sufferings in darkness. And not even mothers can understand the feelings of God when he gave this beloved and only-begotten Son of his unto contumely and shame of crucifixion. Nor are Christ's feelings within reach of mere rhetorical exhibition by a story. When the spear pierced his heart there was only blood and water that came forth. But the chief stream within Jesus' heart was that of inexhaustible *love* ; and that had been the current down which had floated the argosies of blessing for bewildered men for vast ages since the pestilence of sin had fallen.

We must read the life of Jesus Christ as the mere unfolding of this love. There is no explanation of Bethany tears outside of it. He might have taught a Samaritan woman professionally, like any other rabbi upon the road ; but he never would have "sat thus" on the well, unless he had loved her soul and longed to

"He first loved us."Not for ourselves.

save it by the truth. Simon the Cyrenian would have said he was uplifting an unknown malefactor's cross, as he unwillingly came in behind Jesus and raised the timber on his shoulder. But what he was doing really was this—he was succoring eternal Love bearing a burden which for the moment proved too much for its physical embodiment. Peter saw Love walking upon the water; John the Baptist pointed out Love on the shore of the Jordan; Mary Magdalene spoke to Love on the excited morning of the resurrection; Judas kissed Love when he swung the lantern before the face of Jesus; Love had been kneeling under the old olives, and had left drops of blood-sweat on the grass. A whole biography there is, which cannot be read at all, unless read as an unfolding of the love of God in Jesus Christ for men.

And all our love simply grows out of his: "We love him because he first loved us." But why did he first love us? There was nothing in fallen man to attract admiration. We love what is lovely; we believe God does the same. But we are all in ruins. Jonathan loved David because he was so brave and noble, as he told about Goliath.

Nor was this love of God drawn out toward men by any reason of promise for the future. Pharoah's daughter heard the cry of a babe in the bulrushes; she whispered contemptuously of it, "It is only one of the Hebrews' children!" But when the attendant stooped down to pick it up, she saw it was a "goodly child," and something might be made of it if only she would give it

Not that we loved him.A driving energy.

a little fairer chance. But we never had any hope of betterment by ourselves.

Nor even was this divine love drawn out toward us by any affection that we still retained for him. He knows how we naturally feel toward him. "The carnal mind is enmity against God." The love we live upon is the sovereign, unconstrained gift of our God. "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

3. This leads us directly on to the third point made by the apostle: he now considers love as a force from God. The reach of his thought grows extensive; it descends from heaven to earth. Obligation comes after such supreme advantage: "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another."

Affection is a *force*—in itself inherently a driving energy, an elementary power of human nature which asserts itself when unhindered, as gravitation does, or magnetism, or pure sunshine. It is never to be forgotten that souls yield to its influence all the more surely, and all the more extensively, because they yield unconsciously. Herein lies our hope of success in winning souls.

Once I knew a working man, a potter by business, who had one small invalid child at home. He wrought

Story of a potter.Quiet fellowship.

at his trade with exemplary fidelity, being always in the shop with the opening of day. He managed, however, to bear each evening to the bedside of the "wee lad," as he called him, a flower, or a bit of ribbon, a fragment of crimson glass, indeed anything that would lie out on the white counterpane, and give a color in the room. He was a quiet unsentimental Scotchman; but never went he home at nightfall without some toy or trinket, showing he had remembered the wan face that lit up so when he came in. I presume he never said to a living soul that he loved that sick boy so much. Still he went on patiently loving him. And by and by he moved that whole shop into positively real but unconscious fellowship with him. The workmen made curious little jars and teacups upon their wheels, and painted diminutive pictures down the sides before they stuck them in corners of the kiln at burning time. One brought some fruit in the bulge of his apron, and another some engravings in a rude scrap-book. Not one of them all whispered a word, for this solemn thing was not to be talked about. They put them in the old man's hat, where he found them; so he understood all about it. And I tell you seriously, that entire pottery full of men, of rather coarse fibre by nature, grew quiet as the months drifted, becoming gentle and kind, and some of the ungoverned ones stopped swearing, as the weary look on their patient fellow-worker's face told them beyond any mistake that the inevitable shadow was drawing nearer. Every day now somebody did a

A child's funeral.A loyal affection.

piece of his work for him, and put it up on the sanded plank to dry ; thus he could come later and go earlier. So, when the bell tolled, and the little coffin came out of the door of the lowly house, right around the corner out of sight, there stood a hundred stalwart working-men from the pottery with their clean clothes on, most of whom gave a half-day of time for the privilege of taking off their hats to the simple procession, filing in behind it, and following across the village green to its grave that small burden of a child, which probably not one of them had ever seen with his own eyes.

You all understand this : they loved him *because* somebody had loved him. Oh ! if just an earthly affection like this can win others into sharing it, what is there which cannot be done with an affection that is heavenly ? If men love Christ with all their hearts, as that Scotchman loved his boy, the very love will carry heart after heart in its train. And so here is an instrument of usefulness within the reach of every Christian who will employ it.

Some believers think they cannot speak felicitously, nor pray fluently, in public ; but what man lives that cannot love the cause, and love men, and love children, and love Christ loyally, until an entire circle of men and women he touches with his influence shall love him whom unseen we love ; in whom, though now we see him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory !

So I say again, therein lies the secret of all success.

Somebody cares.Love wins love.

You need not go far for illustration. A teacher brought one of her Bible class to me ; she tried to conceal her anxiety and restrain her emotion. But the boy caught a glimpse of the real tears which she could not keep back from her eyes ; and then he listened. Once an active merchant told me a lamentable tale of his book-keeper ; he desired me to interpose and save the young man from ruin. But never should I have reached the heart of the clerk if I had not happened to say his employer's voice faltered when he spoke of him ; for so he knew his master *cared* for his good. Once I mentioned to a clergyman that perhaps I could help a disabled shoemaker with some little work, if he would come and see me soon. And next week I learned that this faithful friend, a city missionary, walked six cold miles that winter evening to tell the cobbler his good news before the midnight. And if ever I straitened myself to get a place for a man, I did then for him. For a man *loved* him, and then so did I.

Hence the whole truth is in the statement : we love Christ because he loved us first. Then the love of Christ constrains us to seek others and lead them to love him ; and we teach them to love a Saviour they never saw by showing them how much we love him. Thus we unconsciously grow Christ-like ourselves, for his Spirit dwells within us. We learn to love human beings because Christ loved the lost race they belong to. And then men, seeing we love them, love us and our work. And so the way is wide open to win them to God.

XIX.

ALPHA AND OMEGA.

I AM ALPHA AND OMEGA, THE BEGINNING AND THE ENDING, SAITH THE LORD, WHICH IS, AND WHICH WAS, AND WHICH IS TO COME, THE ALMIGHTY.—*Revelation* 1 : 8.

BLUE, dim, and solitary, in the wide offing, as one sails over the Ægean Sea, rises the Isle of Patmos suddenly, out in the distance. There is no reason specially for a visit. Little or nothing remains to be seen ashore.

But the Christian tourist sits thoughtfully on the deck, and recalls from his familiar reading that here John, the last of the apostolic band, and the loneliest, was once worshiping, and heard a trumpet ; he looked, and saw a vision ; he listened, and received an encouragement ; he was obedient, and wrote the Apocalypse.

I. What did the trumpet articulate ?

For it uttered words. Its blast rang out in terms and tones of human speech. On that solemn Sunday morning, while this spiritually-minded man was in the act of communion with God, the heavens overhead became vocal. He tells the story in his own simple way :

“I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last : the beginning

A whirling wheel.God changes not.

and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty."

There is, so scientific people tell us, one point, even in a whirling wheel, which is at rest. One line of atoms at the axis, around which all the others revolve, is still. When we conceive of providence, intricate and confused as it is, well typed by the prophet as "a wheel in the middle of a wheel," we are always to remember that God himself is sitting unmoved at the centre of the universe, the Father of lights, from whom cometh down every good and every perfect gift, and with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. And there is relief and comfort in this.

Shocked and shifted as we are in this life, our minds become impressed with a sense of insecurity. We are agitated with a thousand disquiets. No lot in the world is safe. Affairs fluctuate. Individual experience flits and plays with the phases of the moon. Institutions are not fixed. Even the perpetual hills do bow, and the eternal seas do change their bounds. Stability seems but an empty fiction or a dream. Versatilities mock our expectation; vicissitude is the rule of earthly existence.

Over all sits God calmly. His throne never moves. His eye never sleeps. His patience never wearies. He wills and waits at his own pleasure. We look up and find him watching; we know where to find him always. And the beauty and glory and welcome of this thought is centred in upon the one revelation that the God

Immanuel.

Pre-existence.

whom we see is the Saviour whom we love : "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever."

The idea of our divine Lord as a person is to many minds exceedingly indefinite. He seems a mere historic character, born, living, dying, like any other being among the generations of men. We accept his deity as a mysterious doctrine of revelation, essential, of course, to his office and work ; but our understanding of the ineffable meaning it bears is very vague and irrelevant. And that strange life, which began at the manger in Bethlehem, ran through some sorrowful years in Galilee, and then ended on the cross at Jerusalem, has no real significance as a mission of Immanuel, "God with us." We hardly know how to deal with it. Really the weakness of many believers is owing to their absolute inability to make this personal career of our Redeemer available in their experience.

Such confusion is perfectly natural. It is the necessary sequence of a miserable mistake. How childish is the conception of an infinite Son of God, which limits him consciously or unconsciously to an earthly history ending in a failure ! Now the Scripture insists that Jesus' birth was not his beginning, nor was his death his end. The thirty-three years of his human existence bear almost no measure or relation to the real duration of his life. He was living for an eternity previous to their commencing ; he is living now in an eternity as unbroken and as boundless as ever. The incarnation was an incident in his career ; it was only a part

of his work of redemption, a necessary part, a noble part, but not the whole. His biography would have to be written with an alphabet, the Alpha of which no human voice ever repeated, the Omega of which no mortal tongue would know how to speak.

II. What was the vision which John saw ?

"I can just remember," says a theologian of the last century, "that when the women first taught me to say my prayers to God, I used to have an idea of a venerable old man, of a composed and benign countenance, with his own hair, clad in a morning gown of a grave-colored damask, sitting sedately in an elbow-chair." Such conceptions are singular as a study ; but are they not frequent as an experience ? Would it not be to edification if a company of religious people should compare together the actual sight they seem to see when they close their eyes for an act of prayer ? Scripture pictures of the divine Being, which are not infrequent, have nothing of this grossness. There is an unparalleled dignity and grace in every attitude and gesture when the presence of Jehovah is seen. So we expect a picture of grandeur now in the story.

"And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks. And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow ; and his eyes were as a flame of fire ; and his feet like

The mysterious symbols.Augustine's vision.

unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace ; and his voice as the sound of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars ; and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword : and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength."

I do not suppose there is any use in our trying thoroughly to understand this spectacle. It is easy to point out the symbols found in the description. "Hairs white like wool" must signify venerableness ; "eyes as a flame of fire" must mean omniscience ; the "two-edged sword" indicates justice ; the "voice as the sound of many waters" might suggest power ; and the "countenance as the sun shining in his strength" certainly intimates holiness. Still I think the scene loses rather than gains by such an analysis. It does not seem easy to give or to gain any proper conception of God.

At the head of one of the chapters of "Daniel Deronda" stands this motto : "The beginning of an acquaintance, whether with persons or things, is to get a definite outline for our ignorance." It is better that we spend our efforts in using what we do know of the almighty Being who made us, rather than in exhausting ourselves with curious inquiries after his mysteries. The celebrated surgeon Morgagni once let fall his scalpel in the midst of a dissection, and exclaimed : "Oh, that I could simply love God as well as I know him !"

In one of the Continental galleries is an exquisite painting by Murillo, entitled, "The Vision of Saint Augustine." It represents a dream of this great father

The mystery of God.John abashed.

of the church, narrated by himself. He tells us that while busied in writing his discourse upon the Trinity, he wandered along the seashore wrapped in meditation. Suddenly he beheld a child, who, having dug a hole in the sand, appeared to be bringing water from the sea to fill it. Augustine inquired what was the object of his task? He replied that he intended to empty into this cavity all the waters of the great deep. Of course the philosopher exclaimed "Impossible!" But the boy answered, "Not more impossible, surely, than for thee, O Augustine, to explain the mystery on which thou art meditating!" There is a theme for any chastened and thoughtful imagination! See that tall figure in priestly robes, on the border of the sea, looking pitifully down upon the Divine Child—the infant Christ—holding in his slender hand his scoop of shell, his ladle, his small bowl of water, while he looks up so wise with the majesty of a sweet suggestion of rebuke in his gentle face!

III. What was the encouragement which John received?

Evidently he needed something of the sort; for his attitude shows he was as much abashed and frightened as was Isaiah when he saw the Almighty throned in the temple. He is frank in owning it: "And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death."

Christ always the same.Robert Hall's remark.

Here is offered nothing more nor less than what was spoken at first by the trumpet. He was to comfort himself with what had just now alarmed him. Jesus Christ was set for the fall and the rising again. The truth which most humiliates the human soul is the truth which uplifts it. In his person and offices Christ the Redeemer is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever.

What poor weak men want to know more than anything else, is that the Saviour who offers himself for their redemption is surely going to stand steadily true in what he engages to the end, and beyond any conceivable end which mortality may bring to themselves. We have a dim consciousness that we shall never shed our immortality. We cannot get annihilation even by courting it. Some provision, therefore, must be made for a vast future. Here comes in Robert Hall's grand remark: "We are all contemporaneous with God." But feebleness and inadequacy are our portion and our limit. Our Saviour has the fulness of the Godhead. We are petulant and perverse even under grace. His goodness is infinite, his love knows no tempers of chilliness or estrangement; he has no frames of feeling; his attributes and offices never become old or indistinct.

In all the theophanies of the Old Testament, as well as in all the personal communications of the New, Jesus Christ appears exactly the same. The keenest of critical eyes cannot find in him any flaw or caprice; there are no inconsistencies for us to reconcile, no imperfec-

Chartres cathedral.

New Testament and Old.

tions for us to deplore. He was as kind to Abraham as he was to John. He had as sincere a sympathy for Hagar, as she cast her dying boy under a tree, as he had for the widow of Nain, when she followed her dead boy out on the bier. He was as forbearing with Moses as he was with Simon Peter.

And this is what unites the Old Testament and the New closely together. The one supplements and completes the other, because Jesus Christ in both is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever.

In the ancient cathedral of Chartres there may be found upon the five windows over the south door a succinct system of theology, according to the belief of the thirteenth century. The maiden of beautiful figure, who represents the Church or Religion, occupies the central place. Then, on one side, we see Jeremiah with St. Luke seated on his shoulders ; and, opposite this, we discover Ezekiel bearing St. John, and Daniel bearing St. Mark. This was a way those ancient ecclesiastics had of saying that the New Testament rested on the Old. Prophets supported evangelists. The predictions of the one tallied with the realities of the other.

IV. What was the command which John obeyed ?

So he now discovered that the vision and the voice were for others as well as for himself : " Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter." The whole Apocalypse is now before us. It is enough here to indicate a few of the revelations it specially contains.

The word "eternity."Jesus in the Proverbs.

1. The glory of the almighty God is without beginning and without end. Whether it was meant or not, the fact is significant that the word "eternity" occurs but once in our English Bible. A solitary verse employs it to speak of the residence of Jehovah. "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy ; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." Hence, there are two heavens of glory where God deigns to show his splendor, revealed by this solemn, wonderful word—the purified paradise and the purified heart.

2. The glory of Jesus Christ is in the presence of the Father, and likewise without beginning and without end. Where was the Saviour previous to his incarnation? Perhaps it will give to some Bible readers a surprise to be told that the best answer to this question is given in the unfamiliar book of Proverbs (chapter 8): "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. . . . While as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world. . . . Then I was by him, as one brought up with him : and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him." If we simply understand that the Wisdom of the Old Testament means the same as the Word of the New—the divine *Logos*—then we shall put another verse of John easily alongside: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with

The word "family."Forever with the Lord.

God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God."

3. The glory of the saints is to be with Jesus Christ ; it begins with the new birth, and then is without end. Here again it is interesting to remark that the word "family" occurs only once in our New Testament, and then it means the household of the saved. Says the apostle Paul : "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man."

4. The glorified Saviour desires his friends to share whatever glory he possesses, and that without end. When Christ was on the mountain transfigured, he caused that two Old Testament saints should appear with him in glory, in order that the world might know where the redeemed were dwelling centuries after death. And in the final intercession, the last prayer we know of his making, Jesus asked this : "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was. . . . Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am ; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me ; for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world."

XX.

THE MESSAGE TO THE CHURCHES.

HE THAT HATH AN EAR, LET HIM HEAR WHAT THE SPIRIT SAITH
UNTO THE CHURCHES.—*Revelation 3: 6.*

THIS phrase, in precisely the same form, occurs seven times in the opening chapters of the Apocalypse. It is repeated at the end of each one of a series of brief, weighty epistles, addressed to the circle of primitive congregations founded in Asia Minor.

We may readily conceive that Christians of all ages and all climes are meant to be taught by the examples here quoted, and the counsels here given. There is the declension of Ephesus, and the idolatry of Pergamos; there is the deadness of Sardis, and the repulsive lukewarmness of Laodicea: and by these we are warned. And then there is the fidelity of Philadelphia and the steadfastness of Smyrna: and by these we are encouraged. And beyond even these, there is the tree of life promised, the white stone with the name kept secret upon it, and that morning star, which he shall receive who endureth to the end; and by these we are animated with new energy in overcoming the world. It seems, indeed, as if the warning, the encouragement, and the inspiration, were aimed at the same result; namely, to impress upon our minds the unusually se-

rious admonition that we listen to "what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

Let us inquire, therefore, at once, what does the Spirit say? What has the Holy Ghost so uttered in the hearing of the world?

I. Earliest of all the lessons suggested to us in these epistles, we might note this: Every church of Christ has an organic *life* of its own. This is not only distinct from the life of any other church, but even distinct from the life of its members.

In all these seven letters the churches are addressed solely in their organic capacity—not as loose and disintegrated masses of persons, but as bodies having an historic existence and an exclusive responsibility. The apostle is not bidden to write to the believers at large in those cities, but the congregations as such.

The expressions are very peculiar. In his opening sentence, in every case, he turns first to a personage called "the angel of the church." Who this officer was cannot now certainly be known. He was doubtless one of the pastors, a minister high in authority and influence, standing—for the time being, at any rate—at the head of the organization. To him the counsel was given; upon him the sin was charged; for him the praise was brought; with him was left the responsibility of bearing the tidings, giving the admonitions, and directing the penitence and prayers of the people.

The relevancy of this lesson lies just here. It is perhaps one of the most noticeable of the faults of mod-

No evasion of duty.Organic history.

ern Christians, wherever we turn our eyes, that they are trying to lose their individuality in the mass, hoping thereby to evade responsibility and to shirk duty. Whereas God does not even suffer, much less intend, any man shall become inconspicuous by merging himself in an aggregate, or hiding himself in a crowd. To sink a Christian out of responsibility by absorbing him into a church, is like sinking a soldier in an army, and undertaking to lose him in a platoon ; he only passes under more rigid rules and only shows more conspicuously.

II. A second lesson comes right on in the exact line that this indicates, and confirms it : every church has an organic *history* of its own, which very likely makes up its annals.

Take, for illustration, the first of the churches mentioned in the list, the old church in Ephesus. Thirty years had passed since that time when the apostle Paul indited to those people the letter now known in the Bible as the Epistle to the Ephesians. A generation had fallen into their graves. The congregation had all this time been changing and moulding. How many private and personal histories had been concentrated into its life ! Through such a period as that, how inevitably its annals must have perpetuated the lines of religious biography in that wicked city ! How few now remained of those men who burned their wonderful books of magic when the first revival brought them to see their sin ! How the community must have altered in which they had been living and working !

Good and bad, rich and poor, lofty and lowly—how they had dropped each into his own grave at last ! And now those uproarious voices which for the space of two hours, on the day the church was organized, had shouted so ridiculously, “Great is Diana of the Ephesians !” were all silent, hushed in the majesty and mystery which death confers upon those who enter its halls, the small and great.

Get some aged people together on an anniversary, and a quiet stranger might soon ascertain that every church has a special history just as striking as these had in Asia Minor, and as precious. The annals of any church introduce and absorb the individual histories of its members and influential adherents. So rapidly and so imperceptibly do the parts become supplanted that the annual aggregates never feel a shock. In one year, doubtless, there was a man whose behavior or misfortunes gave the people a world of trouble : in another year, there was a man who gave them a world of help. A family clique arose one season which forced a mean division ; there was a blessed revival another season which just saved a wreck. So all this went into the general history, and every event made fresh marks. One man failed in business, and that shook the church badly ; then a man grew suddenly wealthy, and that saved the church.

Let us stop and think how vital, how positively alive and instinct with nervous and palpitating existence, every established organization comes eventually to be.

Stand by the ark.Organic characteristic.

“This and that man was born in her.” Memories of youth and age, of bloom and wasting, of joy heightened and trial assuaged, of doubt cleared away, of penitence accepted—all are sure to cluster around the dear remembered spiritual home. Here the child was trained, who now is a man. Here stood the bride wearing her fair veil and fairer forehead in maiden beauty, who now sleeps in her shroud. Here rested the coffin of one beloved father or mother in Israel, who to-day shines aloft in the light of God’s love. Here rested another, by the side of which charity stood in silence, while mourners held their peace.

And so what a comfort it is, as our steps grow weary, to believe our children will stand by the old ark of our hopes, and all along the years will step up proudly and affectionately under the burden in the solemn hour when we are going to drop it; and thus a church we have loved and prayed for will hold them still!

III. Thus we reach a third lesson; every church has an organic *characteristic* of its own, and this is derived from the social and personal life of those who compose and manage it.

It is the members that make the church. We observe that in every case these seven congregations are addressed with a peculiar allusion to some description, which in strict propriety belonged to each one of them in turn. Just as we speak familiarly of those various congregations with which we are acquainted, all of us understanding that each has a personal singularity,

Quick outlines.Rock-layers in quarries.

which might perhaps be mentioned with a word: one is rich, one is poor; one formerly was fashionable, one is growing proud, one is liberal, another is aristocratic, and another is always having trouble about pew-rents, and another is ruined by the women that gossip so. In just this way these bright little epistles delineate graphically the various churches they were sent to, and give them quick outlines upon our imaginations. You know now, if you have ever happened seriously to observe it, precisely what sort of a church that was in any one of these places. Smyrna was poor and persecuted; Pergamos was on the whole true, but heterodox at points; Ephesus was courageous, but had left first love; Laodicea was sickishly lukewarm.

All this, we understand, was just what the members made the church. Just as when we split a rock in a quarry into layers, traces will be found in it of lines which the sea-waves made there ages ago while the sand was washed into place by the tides and compacted into stone;—so when we read the annals of any old congregation, we shall find how certain epochs were fashioned. Sometimes it was the half-dozen elders that gave form to all the church life. Sometimes the deacons drew a line of demarcation. Sometimes a few restless women, sometimes a few uncomfortable men, set the congregation on fire. Sometimes little factions of malcontents swelled and swayed the periods in which they flourished. Sometimes it was the sewing-society, and very often it was the choir. And always—for amazing and immeasu-

rable good or ill—it was the pastorates along in turn that gained irresistible force and importance.

We sometimes say “corporations have no souls.” Now here is a corporation which has a soul. It seems to be alive, to have veins and arteries and nerves. The church is the Bride of the celestial Lamb. Public sentiment fixes fashionable forms for brides and churches somewhat alike. Our lives and tastes and feelings go into the organizations which we manage. So any man who comes in contact with a church of the living God, who accepts its ordinances, uses its activities, who aids in its support, who enjoys even the shadow of it falling on his path, is very close to God!

IV. We have reached, therefore, the fourth lesson taught in these brief epistles; namely, that every church has an organic *power* of its own. This ability for usefulness is entirely distinct from, and superadded to, the influence exerted by individuals.

In union there is strength. Under our laws congregations usually become corporate bodies. They can thus appear in the courts, can negotiate contracts, can hold property, can undertake projects of good. We have no reason to suppose that there was anything precisely like this in Asia Minor, where all the churches mentioned in these chapters were located. Yet they were none the less compact and corporate for all that. They instituted missions, they provided for impoverished believers, in their own name. They seem to have been officered and equipped for each form of outward work.

Force in a unit.A hunter's rifle.

The fact is, organic life does not reside in a mere technic of law. Sooner or later every congregation would go out into merited extinction, whose only living existence consisted in the decorous deeds of an orderly board of trustees. Church life is figuratively that which abides in a vine, and that true Vine must be our Lord Jesus Christ. Such life has greater force, because it absorbs Christ's life into it, and wields the might of him who is its head.

We are sometimes caught by the manifestations of power exhibited by even one man in a community. Whenever any movement is on foot, that has any good for its aim, we instinctively inquire what does this man think of it? We feel assured that any plan is feasible, any purpose is worthy, when he commits his name to it. When in our times of perplexity we are on the search for some ingenuity which shall bring relief in difficult endeavor, generally we begin to be encouraged in proportion to the cheer of his calls for us to come on, heard hopefully in the distance on ahead of us. Just as hunters out in the forest, finding their shots for game unsuccessful, feel kindled now and then as they hear the report of one well-known rifle, which, as they have learned, is never wont to ring in the woods for nothing. So do we love to listen to the joyous tone of that true man's voice, planning with us and in our behalf.

That is what I mean by power. If one man can do so much for any real cause, how much more a church, speaking like five hundred men in one, can do! Put a

good, firm, true body of Christian people into the midst of any growing neighborhood ; let them begin, at the earliest outgo of their organic life, to be liberal, patriotic, public-spirited ; charitable towards others, and faithful unto themselves ; always on the right side of everything that is honest and of good report. In a little while, they will gain the confidence of all who are around them. And this course, diligently pursued for a term of years, will eventually make that congregation one of the actual levers of society. The result is inevitable by natural law. Real power goes with real force. And real power is as irresistible as the tides in the sea, or the changes in the climate. The moment any useful project has been started, people will ask the quiet question : How stands such and such a congregation ? What is it going to do ? The answer settles success or failure. A chapel of ease for "retired Christians" is a poor thing.

V. Finally, there is given us here the lesson that every church has an organic *mortality* of its own. It is possible for it to become actually extinct, whenever it is cast out by God.

There is nothing superstitiously self-preserving in a religious body of human beings ; the favor of high Heaven alone keeps it in existence ; and if that favor be forfeited through sin, any congregation can die. This point is made clear enough among these epistles to the seven churches. In two instances the warnings take explicit form : "I will remove the candlestick."

Churches dead.The star-fish.

And the tremendous fact lies now on historic record, that of all these seven organizations not one—not even a vestige of one—remains. They would not hear nor heed what the Spirit said unto them. Their very land has become missionary ground. There is not a Christian in Ephesus. Thyatira, in its desolation, has no memory of Lydia, that converted seller of purple. Sardis is abandoned, and Philadelphia has ceased to be the home of brotherly love.

They say there is a star-fish in the Caledonian lakes, sometimes dredged up from the deep water. It looks firm and strong, most compactly put together. But the moment you pull off one of its many branching limbs, no matter how small it may be, the singular creature begins itself to dislocate the rest with wonderful celerity of contortions, throwing away its radiate arms and jerking from their sockets its members, until the entire body is in shapeless wreck and confusion of death, and nothing remains of what was one of the most exquisitely beautiful forms in nature, save a hundred wriggling fragments, each repulsive, and dying by suicide.

So went those seven fair churches into sudden and remediless ruin. So any church may go. Once rejected of God, congregations generally hurry themselves into dissolution with reckless bickering and quarrels; and the end comes swiftly.

XXI.

THE FEW IN SARDIS.

THOU HAST A FEW NAMES EVEN IN SARDIS WHICH HAVE NOT DEFILED THEIR GARMENTS ; AND THEY SHALL WALK WITH ME IN WHITE : FOR THEY ARE WORTHY.—*Revelation 3: 4.*

INDISTINCT memories, classic and historic, float in our minds at the mention of the name of Sardis. There dwelt and reigned Crœsus, the richest man in the world. There ran the Pactolus, whose flashing stream was fabled to flow down golden sands. There, in the plains near by, was marshaled the most numerous host that ever obeyed a single commander ; the army over which proud Xerxes wept as he remembered not one soldier would be left living in a hundred years. And there was lifted the mountain head of Sipylus, upon whose rocky summit was once to be seen the far-famed Niobe, the weeping mother changed into stone.

But gone now is all the glory of that magnificent capital. The armies are vanished, and the kings lie in forgotten graves in the desolate cemetery of the Thousand Hills. The Pactolus turns a lazy mill. Crœsus is immortal only to point a proverb. And no vestige of the Niobe remains, save one that is as symbolically fitting as it is undoubtedly authentic—the hot spring which the old story declared was fed from her tears.

Only a name to live."Names" mean souls.

Who earliest founded the Christian church in Sardis is not certainly known. One bold, startling epistle among the seven written by the last of the apostolic band from the Lonely Isle, is directed to the professed followers of the Lord Jesus Christ dwelling in the precincts. It is from this that we learn their wretched state. They were cold, listless, and formal. Vital piety was dying rapidly out. The great mass of Christians in the city were without any comforts or spiritual force. They had only a name that they lived, and were dead. It is not said they were scandalous, but sluggish.

Still, not all: an honorable moiety among the many are mentioned as deserving of confidence and as likely to receive favor. "Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy."

It is not with the many, but with these few, that we have to do to-day. And we really at this moment pass away from the contemplation of Sardis as such, accepting this single verse as a vivid description of the true followers of the Saviour in all time. If you will carefully examine the passage, you will perceive that it includes four particulars, each of which may profitably occupy our attention for a little while in turn, and will perhaps suggest a lesson of good to thoughtful minds willing to hear and to heed it.

I. The first of these is the RARITY of those who are the true saints on the earth. There were "a few names

Rarity of saints.

"So remarkable for nothing."

even in Sardis." It is wise to remember, and yet sad to confess, that there are only a few such anywhere.

For the real standard of discrimination in this matter is loftier than many imagine. It is easy to distinguish in the Christian world around us two widely differing classes of persons; the one, made up of those who advance earnestly into life, and almost instantaneously assume and honorably hold positions of importance and usefulness; the other, made up of those who never rise into notice at all, but constantly remain in comparative inefficiency and insignificance. Those make their influence to be felt upon their generation and leave their mark behind them; these produce no impression while living, and dying make no sign. The former grow up loving, lovely, and beloved, and are the "sought out" among the many "forsaken;" the latter give reason for the sarcastic saying "they are remarkable for nothing so much as for the fact that they are so remarkable for nothing."

There are palpably two styles of piety in the church of our Redeemer. I do not assert that he allows them both, or accepts them equally; nor that their results are alike lofty or safe; I only recognize what most people observe as a fact. The one is vital, active, and efficient; the other is torpid, listless, and low. And between these two extremes are found all grades of activity and all degrees of devotion. But sadly the truth presses on every mind that it is the many who are sluggish and fruitless: it is only the few who are faithful. The most careless of all observers cannot have failed to see that

"Retired Christians."God's hidden ones.

of any church or community only one man here and another yonder belongs to what might be called the positive workers, minding and managing the weightiest interests. A little band of executive laborers produce what each year gathers.

The glory of the church has, therefore, ever been and will doubtless ever be these "few" among the many. There was a Noah among the antediluvians. There was a Lot among the citizens of the plain. There were the three Hebrew youths in the Babylonish court. There were the seven thousand in Ahab's time, who had not bowed the knee to Baal. And there were some saints in Cæsar's household in Rome. So there are, doubtless, in most of the forms of ecclesiastical organization, however heterodox and loose, some who are living lives of saving faith in Jesus Christ, and belong to the "hidden ones" of God.

But it is these few who save the many. Ten righteous men in Sodom would have delivered the city from the hail of fire. The worth cannot be estimated of any one individual who is truly faithful to the Master. It is the rarity which increases the value. Common gems make cheap jewels. A Christian really alive amid the deadness of our too formal communions, is a treasure and a choice benediction from God himself. We find that out sometimes for the first time when a good man dies. We discover that a great cause is trembling; and then it occurs to us that this is what he used to stand by and steady. We see the enemy coming in through a

Vanished hands.Voices that are still.

gate he was wont to guard. A duty is no longer done, which we had always relied without disappointment on him to perform. We are conscious that our poor hearts are sinking and growing weaker, through lack of his prayers, and our souls are growing dull from want of the old chieftaincy of example which kindled them. We miss the words of wise counsel and gentle sympathy and cordial reassurance with which we had always been met. When we come up to look in each other's faces, and take each other's hands, and cast a quick glance of wistful searching, almost unconsciously, around for that other face and that other hand—gone, then we begin to feel the blankness of a sense of loss. A score of the many cannot take the place—they worry us if they attempt to occupy the place—of even one of the “few.” Consecrated, forceful, Christian, manhood is rare, rare indeed in this shallow and easy-going world.

II. In the second place, this verse which we are studying tells us, next to the rarity of true saints, their PURITY. They “have not defiled their garments.”

Of course we all understand the precise force of this figure. Just as a man, clad in a robe of linen, seeks with great carefulness to pass undefiled through the dust, the smoke, and the ashes of a factory or a furnace, so the child of God is represented as endeavoring fastidiously to keep his garments of hope and faith, of meekness, truth, and honesty, free from all contamination, even while he is mingled in the confused round of everyday life with other men, better or worse. You

Spiritual lepers.Commonplace tests.

perceive that this is the ancient emblem repeated from the Old into the New Testament. Is there not something singularly suggestive in the name always given to sin under the former dispensation? There it was called "uncleanness." He who had transgressed any law was held to be "defiled." Hence all those washings, those "divers baptisms" of the ritual. Ah, if only spiritual lepers had now, as of old, to keep crying "unclean, unclean!" in the highways, as they drew near their neighbors, how plaintive the air would be with the wails of the penitent!

Our trouble is, that we turn ourselves away from the grand commonplaces of religious life, under the plea that we are spiritual and live on an elevated plane. We do not sing the fifteenth Psalm as we might. It is not interesting to talk about backbiting and swearing and usury and false witness. Such details concerning worldliness are too radical, too searching, for this generation to bear. To make truth-telling an evidence of regeneration; to question grown men about ungenerous gossip; to offer mercantile Christians the subject of exorbitant interest for meditation in the preparatory lecture; all this would be pronounced out of taste in the age of conversation concerning the "higher life."

But, it so happens that the Scriptures fasten precisely upon our little personal habits and tastes and behaviors and principles, and make them the test of piety. Holiness of life is relied upon more than vividness of experiences. Nothing within the range of human possibil-

The priest Jaddua.Cecil's temptation.

ity so moves the world into admiration of Christians as perfect purity. There is in history the tale of Alexander, who was met, when he came to besiege Jerusalem, by the high priest Jaddua ; this old man went forth to hold conference with him. He wore his robes of office ; and so splendid was the presence of this ambassador of God with his garments of embroidered gold and his shining plate across his forehead on which was graven the name of Jehovah, that the emperor fell to the ground in reverence. That may well have been true ; it makes us think of the scriptural fact that the Roman soldiers, coming to apprehend our Lord in the garden after the betrayal, "went backward and fell to the ground," the moment he said, "I am he." There was an undoubted majesty in the pure face and the spotless holiness of the suffering Master.

This is a day of dreadful sudden scandals among the followers of Jesus. "Men fall," said the shrewd Guizot, "on the side to which they lean." The world is not a friend to grace at all. In his autobiography the honest Cecil tells us that, on one occasion, he went to visit an anxious sinner in his parish ; he found him on a sick bed, and there was on the wall above the couch a painting so beautiful as to attract his notice, and he actually forgot himself in administering to the wants of the perishing soul. He was so grieved by the dereliction that he gave up forever a gallery of art he had been loving to frequent. It may be our privilege to use the world, but we are not to abuse it, or be abused by it.

The saints' prospect.

The land of "the living."

III. Let us, however, go back to the verse once more ; for it suggests to us, in the third place, the PROSPECT of the saints : the confident and scriptural expectation of these few among the many, who have lived the pure life ; "and they shall walk with me in white." Remember, now, who is speaking, and where he is, and you will see that this emphatic declaration includes three promises in one : *activity*—"they shall walk :"
companionship—"they shall walk with me :"
and *glory*—"they shall walk with me in white."

1. The word here rendered "walk " means to accompany around. Thence it is applied by an easy trope to living with, sharing the continuous lot of, one with whom we dwell. It here presents to us the animating anticipation of all the true children of God, that they have yet before them an endless life in the midst of the many incitements and amenities of the social community in heaven.

In our feebleness and mistake we sometimes look upon those who are taken from us as dead ; whereas, the correct conception is that they have never been so much alive as now. An aged believer was met by his friend, who, grasping his hand, said, "Why, I had not thought you were in the land of the living !" "I am not yet," was the clearer answer, "but I shall enter it soon." Those who are gone are preserved, those who are departed are at home, those who are lost are saved. "That which thou sowest is not quickened except it die." In all the plenitude of enjoyment, in all the ex-

Brahma asleep.Not work, but worry.

ercise of powers newly invigorate, in the very sunlight of reunion and communion, they are walking this very day in an exalted existence, of which we know nothing as yet but the glimmer of its gladness through the translucent gates of pearl. Said the dying Taylor, "God has a work even in heaven for his children to do."

For even the "rest" of heaven is not a repose of indolent listlessness and inaction. The Hindoos believe that the great god Brahma spends the infinite ages of his eternity evermore asleep. And their most exalted notions of the state of the blessed are only clustered around one lazy anticipation of sharing the slumbers of this deified sluggard. But our Bible tells us that the "works" of the righteous do "follow them." Our trouble here is, not the energy we put forth, but the waste of it, and the thwarting of it, and the needlessness of much of it. It is not work, but worry, that breaks the human heart; and in heaven there will be work without worry. "Therefore are they before the throne of God, and they serve him day and night in his temple." So the Christian's departure is only a sign of relief. "Children," said John Wesley's mother, "when I am released, sing a psalm of praise to God!"

2. "They shall walk with me:" the companionship is that of Christ himself, for it is he that is here speaking. And hence, we see that what the saints have been sighing for most longingly, earnestly pleading that they might have it even for one glad hour of nearness and communion—that they are by and by to have without

Moses' prayer.The transfiguration.

interruption and in full measure forever, the presence of the Saviour in person. "Things internal," says the good Bishop Leighton, "will then be things eternal."

On the mountain prayed Moses, "Show me, O Lord, thy glory!" Not then could his petition be granted; he could not look upon the Lord's face and live. Fifteen hundred years he had to wait, and then upon another mountain he saw the transfigured Christ. He was satisfied then to behold the glory and to share it. Around him in that wonderful hour he contemplated the true picture of heaven. For there were Peter, James, and John, from the new dispensation, with himself and Elijah from the old; three disciples from the living and two prophets from the dead; all appearing in glory, knowing each other, and giving exchange of welcome. But the chief attraction in the scene was found in the person of the Son of Man among them, now clearly revealed as the Son of God; and they talked "of the decease he should accomplish at Jerusalem."

So when the entire church of Immanuel come home; when the patriarchs and seers of old, with the martyrs and witnesses of after years, meet on the mount of God; when, gathered from the four winds, all the sealed shall crown the summit of the heavenly hill; they will have but one song to sing, and one form to look upon; lifting up their eyes, they will see "Jesus only."

3. In the use of the expression with which this promise closes most of us will recognize the return of the

Walking "in white.""Fine linen."

beautiful figure we have already considered: "They shall walk with me in white." It is the symbol of glory hereinafter to be revealed to believers.

In his earthly transfiguration, the face of our Lord "did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light; so as no fuller on earth could whiten it." Such descriptions refer to the stainless, uncontaminated purity of those who are living in the celestial life. When it is said that to the Lamb's wife, that is, the Church, it was "granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen clean and white," we are told expressly the symbolic reason: "The fine linen is the righteousness of the saints." Those whom the New Testament seer in apocalyptic vision beheld arrayed in the heavenly garments, one of the elders told him were "they which came out of great tribulation, and had washed their robes, and had made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

Hence, here are two thoughts distinctly suggested, each of which has great value. The one is, that the glory of that future state is not so much in its triumphs and trophies as in its graces. The glory is its sinlessness, its perfect freedom from all pollution. So it is of much more importance what we shall *be*, than what we shall *have*. Then the other thought is, that holiness here is its own reward here and yonder too. For it is those who "have not defiled their garments," of whom it is said, "they shall walk with me in white." White now, white forever!

Sardian dyes.

Purple vats.

Now, before we leave this most interesting figure, let us be patient enough to ask the question whether there was any particular reason why the apostle should choose such a curious form of rhetorical speech. It is worth mentioning that Sardis was as historically remarkable for its purple and crimson dyes as Thyatira. John may have more than once seen the white linen brought up to these vast vats filled with the red fluid, looking exactly like blood; he must have watched the operation of plunging the cloth in, and seen how the previous stains, if such there were, were all covered and lost in that royal red. Now, by an easily understood process of mind, he would imagine the work reversed; he might even be supposed to repeat the words of the ancient prophet softly to himself, as he would keep thinking: "Christ's blood is not like this Sardian or Tyrian dye, that turns white to purple and gray to red; it turns the dull and defiled into beauty, and the stained into purity: 'Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool!'"

IV. So, finally, we reach the words in this verse which specify the PREROGATIVE of the saints. Really, it covers much worth thinking about: their rarity, their purity, their prospect, and now their prerogative: "they are worthy."

The significance of this statement takes its force from the connection in which it stands. For it is given as a reason for an expectation that they shall one time re-

“They are worthy.”Desert and meetness.

ceive the felicities of the heavenly companionship with the Lord Jesus Christ. “They shall walk with me in white, *for* they are worthy.” One thing is their own; one privilege belongs to them inalienably; one prerogative is asserted in their behalf; they are proper companions for God’s Son.

This sounds very bold, and a discrimination is perhaps needed to guard against mistake. We must carefully examine in what this worthiness consists. There are two meanings to the word as used in the Scriptures: desert and meetness. Here it needs only to be said with all emphasis that there is no desert in any saint of anything beside wrath and judgment. There is, however, a fitness for heaven, and this is the gift of grace as much as heaven itself is. The apostle bids us give “thanks to the Father, who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.” This white robe that the redeemed are to wear is the robe of the Redeemer’s merits. He gives it to those whom he loves.

And when it is given, it belongs to them, and they need to ask no favors of the universe that sees the honor. For the promise and the benediction call to and answer each other out in the celestial air. Listen: “He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.” There is the proffer; and here is the reward: “Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they

The saints' "right."

"Rich as Cræsus."

may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." Oh, the glory of the thought that poor human beings—dust and ashes—are lifted so high by divine grace that they actually have prerogatives in celestial companionship which no creature can challenge! They can come up to the gate of heaven, and have a "right" to enter, as a king's son can come to the palace door, and no servant will claim to stop him, the prince and heir, from passing into his father's house!

This, then, is the believer's privilege and final outlook: to walk in the midst of stirring activities ever new, ever joyous, and ever successful; sharing a communion with Christ ever free, high, hearty, and divine; dwelling with a conscious purity absolutely stainless among the unstained: this is heaven!

Such a conception takes all the sting out of death. A heart full of love for the Redeemer longs only to go to him. It has no great professions to make; it simply wants to get away quietly, and leave the record of fidelity behind. "Never mind the dying testimony," said Whitefield; "give me the living testimony." What is not true of the worldling is exactly true of the Christian. Come back to Sardis, a moment more for a little story. Cræsus, this man who gave his name to a proverb, was at last conquered by an enemy. His capital was lost, his army was defeated, and he was about to be burned to death by his conqueror. While he was lying bound on the funeral pile, he called aloud three times the name

“Solon—Solon—Solon!”The resurrection dawn.

of Solon—Solon—Solon! They asked him what he meant. And then it came out that this Athenian philosopher, once on a flying visit to Sardis, had warned Cræsus of coming reverses, and bade him “never say he was happy till he was dying!” Now he was dying, and an awful sarcasm was in the words! But this is actual Christian experience. The child of God is happy in death, for it is the ushering in of the latter-day glory upon his ransomed soul!

The first hour in the other world must be full of surprises. I can imagine how the heir of some princely estate, thrown suddenly into possession, journeys to the mansion and arrives after the nightfall. I can picture his curious interest as he tries to ascertain the extent of his wealth, looking out from the window into the moonlit meadows and lawns. But what is all this to the sight he will see, when in the full burst of the morning his eyes take in the sweep of mountain and valley, forests and plains, from the wide ancestral portal thrown open to him as its lord!

Christians can talk here together in the night-time about their heavenly estate. But none have yet imagined what will be the completed vision to be seen when at the resurrection dawn they stand before the door of what is their Father's house—and their own!

XXII.

THE LION OF JUDAH.

AND ONE OF THE ELDERS SAITH UNTO ME, WEEP NOT: BEHOLD, THE LION OF THE TRIBE OF JUDA, THE ROOT OF DAVID, HATH PREVAILED TO OPEN THE BOOK, AND TO LOOSE THE SEVEN SEALS THEREOF.—*Revelation 5: 5.*

It was reported some few years ago, that a Sabbath-school superintendent in one of our great cities rose in the midst of a convention and publicly prayed that “our Father in heaven would keep these little lambs of his flock from the ravages of the Lion of Judah!” What must one do with a misconception like that?

The theme brought before us on this occasion is full of interest. It turns us back to the beginning of the Bible for an interpretation of a name given to our Saviour at the end. Genesis clear across eighteen hundred years touches the Apocalypse. The prophecy of Jacob finds its answer in the vision of John.

When the time had arrived for the patriarch to turn his face to the wall, gather up his feet in the bed and die, he sent for an audience of his sons from all the far places of their abode. They came around their father’s couch with something of sadness and perhaps of alarm; for it was understood that their fortunes were to be told under inspiration, and Reuben was to be disinherited in

Jacob's death-bed.John's vision.

favor of Judah. One after another advanced at the call, heard those sober words of prediction that outlined and fixed his future, then reverently retired for a new brother's summoning. By and by, Judah stood in his place to listen ; and this is what Israel said : "Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise ; thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies : thy father's children shall bow down before thee. Judah is a lion's whelp ; from the prey, my son, thou art gone up : he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion ; who shall rouse him up ? The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come ; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be."

So explicit is the application of this name of Judah's Lion to our Lord Jesus Christ here in the Apocalypse, that there is not even a pressing need to quote the half-verse in the epistle to the Hebrews : "For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah."

Let us attempt to study a whole chapter at a time—the fifth of Revelation. There we shall find an accurate account of a spectacle which the apostle John saw, that seems to have greatly aroused his curiosity ; this was followed by a conversation he heard, which evidently very seriously depressed his feelings ; but there came directly to him an encouragement which was calculated to lift his heart ; then he witnessed a scene of celestial worship, quite full of grandeur and wonder ; and this ended with a song sung by three extraordinary choirs.

The celestial library.

The book of Providence.

I. The description of the spectacle he saw is found in the opening verse : “And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the back side, sealed with seven seals.” The noticeable things here are the book and the seals of the book ; what do these mean ?

1. What we know of the book is conjectural. The idea suggested is that of a permanent record. Four volumes are mentioned in the Scriptures as belonging to God’s celestial library. (1.) The “book of the living”—Ps. 69 : 28—in which are enumerated all items of personal human history, as God has decreed them—Ps. 139 : 16. (2.) The “book of the law,”—Gal. 3 : 10—in which are included all God’s demands for obedience and duty. (3.) The “book of remembrance”—Mal. 3 : 16—in which are noted all the incidents of each believer’s continued experience—Ps. 56 : 8. (4.) The “book of life”—Phil. 4 : 3—in which are recorded all the names of those redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, and no others—Rev. 20 : 15. Of these perhaps the likeliest to be the one John now saw in God’s right hand was the first, containing the secret decrees of divine providence concerning human life and the destiny of nations. But no certainty can be predicated. And the sole suggestion to be relied upon is that our Maker, who is also our Judge, proceeds in all his government on no caprice, but on strict principles of justice, as of one who *keeps books* wherein all things appear, and by which all souls are to be tested at the last.

The seven seals.The challenge made.

2. What we learn of the seals is plain. For there can be no significance to such a thing beyond what the ancient custom would indicate, namely, that the book was closed. Divine purposes are absolutely inscrutable. Times and seasons, events and incidents, are concealed from human knowledge till it is God's will to reveal them. "Seven" was considered the perfect number; and this might mean that the volume was altogether sealed, or that it was sealed in an orderly way so as to be opened only a part at a time.

II. Now comes the conversation which John heard. An angel made a challenge: no one accepted it: John burst into tears. "And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon. And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open, and to read the book, neither to look thereon."

1. A strong—some great chief—angel cries aloud for a chosen champion to appear who would assume the right to open this volume. The question raised does not seem to be so much one of ability as of character or rank. Who is *worthy*? The assumption is that Jehovah has no equal. This demand was calculated to arrest attention, and to fasten it upon the fact that "none but himself could be his parallel."

2. No one advances at the call. Heaven had no angel even among the brightest seraphs that burned be-

No one can interpret God.

A man's tears.

fore the throne : earth had no sage even among its wisest, best, or most exalted : nor had hell under the earth, either of fallen angels or of lost men, any one who could come forward now, and unseal this mysterious volume.

3. The apostle fell into tears. His disappointment was utter. His desire had been insatiate. Having seen so much through the open door, he wished passionately to see more. And now it was a shame that the universe had no voice which could speak to such a challenge. But note one thought for ourselves just here. It really appears pitiable to find such a man at his worst. Jeremiah was weeping ; but he had reason. Paul wept ; but he was talking of sinners. Jesus wept ; for he pitied the mourning sisters. But there was no need whatever for John's tears. "He that believeth shall not make haste." John learned all he wished before long.

III. What was the encouragement he received ? "And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not : behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof." He was met with no rebuke : but he received a word of sympathy, and then a word of information, both of which gave him help.

1. The elder said "Weep not." Christ used to say to his disciples, "Be not afraid." The angel said to Paul in the night, "Fear not." The disciples said to Bartimeus, "Be of good comfort." Gabriel said to Daniel, "Thou art greatly beloved." Cynical irony has de-

Just a kind word.The Lion is a Lamb.

clared that words are cheap. But God has told believing people to be kind to each other ; and sometimes just a word of good feeling lifts one's spirits very much.

2. But what John wanted most was to understand about the mysteriously sealed book. So he had a word of explanation added. It was certainly to be opened. For the elder told him that a being would soon show himself—divine, as the Root of David—human, as the Lion of Judah—who should be worthy and be permitted to loosen the seven seals. John looked at once for the Lion ; he saw a Lamb.

IV. And then followed the scene of wonderful worship he witnessed. The vision now dazzles us too much for calm details of exposition. This Lamb of God we clearly understand was the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour. Here we see him at his highest.

1. His rank was supreme over all ; so he stood in the midst. "And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne, and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb, as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth." Horns are the emblem of power ; he had seven ; so he had perfect or limitless power. Eyes are the emblem of intelligence ; he had seven ; so he had perfect knowledge. And also he had the seven-fold gifts of the Holy Ghost. Hence, omnipotence, omniscience, and infinite holiness show that in Immanuel the Redeemer "dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily."

Christ takes the book.A king's gift.

2. His office was to ascertain and execute the entire will of Jehovah. And just here comes out the illustration we need of the fortieth Psalm, in which the Messiah is represented as saying : "Then said I, Lo, I come : in the volume of the book it is written of me ; I delight to do thy will, O my God : yea, thy law is within my heart." So he comes forward now before the universe, and takes the seven-sealed volume as his own by right. "And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne."

3. His honors came at once, for he was "worthy." He had "prevailed." All the shining ranks of heaven fell down in meek obeisance and adoration : "And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of saints." They had harps ; so they praised him with music ; they had vials of odors ; so they praised him with supplications. It is related that Alexander once bestowed a gift so large upon one of his courtiers that the surprised man cried out in deprecation, "Oh, this is too much for me to receive !" And the answer came with affectionate encouragement : "Always ask great things of a king ; nothing is too much for him to give !"

This wonderful verse does not stand alone. On another occasion the apostle witnessed a similar scene : "And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer ; and there was given unto him much

Prayers make best praises.Jesus is God.

incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand." Prayers to a God like ours sometimes make the very best praises.

It is evident the chapter will have to be divided, and we reserve the song John heard for a study by itself. There are two at least of the thoughts which the spectacle suggests that I am glad to interject before we go on away from them.

1. One of them is this: the announcement is made that earthly arrangements of providential government and keeping of the saints are hereafter committed to Jesus Christ. All human life is now ordered by his wisdom. For he has taken the book out of the hands of his Father, and is "worthy" to open its seven-fold seals. Hence, the Being who manages each earthly experience is one who in his own person has shared humanity in all that disturbed history could put in it. How well he understands us, whoever we are!

So there is quite a good word of comfort here for the poor. There is no respect of persons with God. No peasant from the obscurest village—no shepherd from the most secluded plain—no artisan in the clean garments of an honest calling—ever was kept waiting in the ante-chamber, asking audience of his Lord. He may have it any day, any instant, for the seeking: the publican had it in the parable, even when the Pharisee

Watts' hymn.

All goes into the book.

missed. This king of heaven is Jesus; and all the dispensations of daily life are with him.

“Our souls shall tread the desert through with undiverted feet;
And faith and flaming zeal subdue the terrors that we meet:
A thousand savage beasts of prey around the forest roam,
But Judah's Lion guards the way, and guides the wanderers home.”

So, likewise, there is a word of encouragement here for those cumbered with much serving. More than once are such bidden to cast their care upon the Saviour; and the wonderful invitation is backed with the argument that he “careth for them.” Christ came not to be ministered unto, but to minister. He took that book out of his divine Father's hand with his Father's consent and in pursuance of a covenant. Hence, patient working-men that toil for bread—wives and mothers who seem to live just for children that are clamorous, feeble, and petulant—watchers who find their worried world within the four walls of a sick-room—nurses that strive to allay the querulous sorrows of a beloved invalid—industrious fathers, up with the early sunrise to be the first at labor, when jobs are few—all these have their very present help in every time of need. A tranquil eye is keeping watch of them, and all fidelity goes down in the book, and will be found there when the seven seals break!

How fine a thing it is to know that all which any true Christian prizes is kept up so high and so far out of reach that no violence can touch it! Jesus holds the

The martyr Basil.The lamb as a symbol.

book in his own hand, and we have the testimony of John that no one can open it besides. Our lives are hid, with Christ, in God. Sometimes the world imagines it has despoiled us of some cherished possession. It is like the thief's stealing our deeds of the homestead we live in ; that is all. He gets only a paper ; the deed is recorded in God's book ; and that which we owned is just as safe as ever. No child of God ever yet was despoiled of a good title to a home in "The Saints' Rest." The Christian's treasure is in heaven. Nothing earthly can lay a finger on it. "You may take away my head," said the old martyr Basil ; "but that is all ; you cannot take away my crown."

2 Then the other thought is this : the Lamb of God is also the Lion of Judah. "Behold the goodness and severity of God." Much that is very significant there is in this name given to our Lord Jesus Christ. A lamb is the emblem of innocence and purity. Reference is made to his suffering on the cross, so far as the sacrifice is concerned. But as descriptive of his character, it may strike some as weak. For a lamb is almost the only creature in existence which has no weapon of offence or defence. This is designed to teach us how gentle and kind he is while he offers his grace.

Furthermore, this form of speech here is very strange. This term rendered *lamb* occurs only once besides in the New Testament, and that is in the passage where Simon Peter is told to feed the Lord's lambs ; it is not the usual word for lambs ; it is a diminutive ; it means *little lambs*.

The Lamb is a Lion."The wrath of the Lamb."

And so the added suggestion is given that Jesus is very innocent, and very gentle, and very kind.

Now John looks for the Lamb, and the songs praise the Lamb ; but all the while, every soul in heaven knows he is a Lion. While the Saviour pleads with sinners, he is gentle and kind ; but when he comes to judgment, he will come with all his majesty upon him ! I know of no expression in the Bible that touches me so as this : "The *wrath* of the Lamb !" "And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bond man, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains ; and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb."

When he, who all along for these years of waiting and inviting has been wearing the form of gentleness and peace, shall have changed his visage, and put on his form of justice and vengeance—when he, who has been pleading as an advocate, shall show himself as the judge to pronounce sentence upon the ungodly—who is there that will be willing to confront him ? who shall be able to stand ?

It seems melancholy to end our study of God's word with such a picture of threatening. There are better verses than these for us to repeat to each other. Oh, how much finer and gladder is that prophecy of the saints' rest in heaven with their Lord, the Lamb !

"The Lamb shall lead them."

At home in heaven.

"Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple : and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more ; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters : and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

And so it comes to us that believers will not find themselves strangers in heaven. For he whom they have known best is he to whom they are to stand closest. He to whom they owe most is he who will give to them the more that is coming. The Lamb who made them saints is the guide who will make them seers. The Saviour for whom they have suffered longest will be the Jesus who suffered for them first. And every joy of the infinite future will be brought to them in the hand which was once pierced.

XXIII.

THE SINGING LEGIONS OF GOD.

AND THEY SANG A NEW SONG, SAYING, THOU ART WORTHY TO TAKE THE BOOK, AND TO OPEN THE SEALS THEREOF: FOR THOU WAST SLAIN, AND HAST REDEEMED US TO GOD BY THY BLOOD, OUT OF EVERY KINDRED, AND TONGUE, AND PEOPLE, AND NATION; AND HAST MADE US UNTO OUR GOD KINGS AND PRIESTS: AND WE SHALL REIGN ON THE EARTH.—*Revelation* 5: 9, 10.

THE sight of a great mass of soldiers is, to a thoughtful man, often saddening. They have such exposure in doing their ordinary duty; there is such a necessary separateness in their lives; there are among them so many sure to die and lie in unknown graves. Yet each is the embodiment of a history, a hope, and a destiny. Xerxes is reported as having wept aloud when from a height he was once reviewing the largest army he ever commanded.

But when soldiers sing, there is always some enlivenment in the spectacle. Ten or twenty thousand male voices make very glorious music; they say the plains quiver with the vibration. When ancient Xenophon's hosts first saw the Euxine Sea, after the painful march which almost wore them out, they cried with a great shout at once, "*Thalatta! thalatta!*"—"The sea! the sea!" so loudly, says the veracious historian, that the

God's army always at praise.Faber's "Music."

very birds dropped down on the wing, and the waves lay quiet under the sweep of the sound.

It is interesting to notice that whenever we are shown these pageants of the grand army of God in review, the Scriptures represent the legions as singing. And usually we find recorded the exact words of their song. Evidently more is made of music in heaven than we are wont to make of it here on earth. At any rate, the words are brought into more prominence than modern artists are accustomed to give them. A strain of inarticulate sound has power, but the joining of intelligent thought to the tones is worth more by far as an act of adoration. Recall some of Faber's lines :

“ There are sounds like flakes of snow falling
In their silent and eddying rings ;
We tremble—they touch us so lightly,
Like the feathers from angel's wings.
There are pauses of marvelous silence,
That are full of significant sound,
Like music echoing music
Under water, or under ground.
O Music ! thou surely art worship ;
But thou art not like praise or prayer ;
And words make better thanksgiving
Than thy sweet melodies are.”

It may be worth while, for the sake of some fine lessons we might hope to learn, to look carefully through one of these exhibitions in the Apocalypse. Our attention may well be fastened upon that music, for there

The Lion of Judah.The new song.

were three anthems in the performance, each with its distinct theme, and all were succeeded by a chorus of one word, the shortest and the best of all.

We have already been over the earlier part of this fifth chapter of the Revelation, and have seen the grand spectacle as it appeared when the Lion of the tribe of Judah took the book of divine decrees from Jehovah's hands. It was at this supreme moment that the celestial singing began.

The scene grows dazzling as one proceeds in the reading ; and while a writer might well be humiliated at the poverty of his own language in any attempt to paraphrase it, the exceeding beauty of the inspired description lures him forward in the study of its details even to the smallest particular.

1. There was first the *believers'* song. Its theme was redemption, the salvation of the soul through the blood of the Lamb. So its singers were the ransomed : "And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof : for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation ; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests : and we shall reign on the earth."

This song was "new" necessarily, for the theme was absolutely fresh in celestial history. There had been sin in heaven, and there had been justice wrought on those who had sinned. Some of the angels had fallen from their high estate, and were at the moment expi-

The redeemed singing alone.Personal reminiscences.

ating their wickedness in the abodes of the lost. No atonement was ever made or offered in their behalf. Here was therefore a subject never before celebrated in the songs of God's house.

It was exclusive also, for only those who knew what it meant could sing it with the spirit and the understanding. Emphasis must be laid upon the expressions of personal acknowledgment. "Thou hast redeemed *us*:" "thou hast made *us* unto our God kings and priests." The experience of each child of God is individual. Reminiscence is a part of his duty, and it always leads to gratitude, and starts a new song. No man can sing as heartily as he who has received most favor. Says the Psalmist: "I waited patiently for the Lord; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord." We could reason legitimately, therefore, that the song of the saints in heaven would be sung by saints alone. But a verse there is elsewhere which sets this at rest: "And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth."

It was a great song. For the multitude of singers was simply innumerable. So the sound rose "like mighty

Sixteen missionaries."A royal priesthood."

thunderings, and the voice of many waters." The redeemed come from all regions of the earth, and from all ages of history. I once heard sixteen foreign missionaries singing together the hymn, "Thus far the Lord hath led me on," to the tune of "Hebron," each using the native language where he had been laboring. It sounded harmoniously, and was about as intelligible as choirs generally make it. What a glorious heritage of worth the church has in its continuous history !

It was likewise a royal song. It is a pity that our translators put that present tense into the future. For the redeemed do not say "we *shall* reign," but "we *are* reigning." Christians are the regal and the regnant race in the world *now*. The Lord declared that his people should be "a kingdom of priests." Peter calls believers "a holy priesthood," and afterward, in another place, "a royal priesthood." The glory of each Christian is in this office of prayer ; for he has an undoubted power and privilege of intercession. When the embassy from the northern army returned from Rome to make report, they said : "We found a city of palaces, and a kingdom of kings." Heaven is a city of only one palace, in which are many mansions ; but those who dwell there are princes.

2. Next in John's vision came the song of *the angels*. The theme of this was the character and rank of Jesus Christ.

Observe the vast numbers of the singers, and the stress they put on their strain with a "loud voice : " "And I

The angels sing also.Glory to the Lamb.

beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders : and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands."

Observe the vast ascription of honors to Christ : "Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing." This seems to include everything that mind can conceive of supreme ownership and control. They lay the universe down at his feet. These heavenly beings are acting in full obedience to the apostle Paul's earthly exhortation : "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus : who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God ; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men : and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name : that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth ; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Observe the special reason they suggest for their surrender. It is as "the Lamb that was slain" that they exalt him to the eminence. These angels had no part in the atonement, but they knew just where Christ's great-

The angels challenged.The creatures' song.

est exploits had been done. They had for ages "desired earnestly to look into" this mystery of his humiliation; now they understood what it meant. Just before Jesus left the bosom of the Father, on his way to suffering and death, while even the lowliest garments of his humiliation were on him, they had been challenged to pay him the usual adoration: "And again, when he bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him." As if the Almighty would say, "You shall not even now despise my Son! though he is bearing sin and shame and contumely, give him every honor as the chief in the realm!" Now they saw him coming to his old place and glory again; and they knew that the Lamb of God had brought fresh honor to his adorable name.

3. Then the choir of *creatures* begins the anthem assigned to them; and now the theme is the dominion of the Lord Jesus Christ: "And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."

Just notice the very singular voices employed in this choir. Birds and beasts, and worms and fishes—oh, wonder! how will such creatures be able to sing together? God is to listen, and he will understand them and be satisfied. Much of this world's music must be lost to us, our hearing is so very imperfect. Scientific

Imperfect hearing.The chorus.

people calculate the swiftness of insects' wings in their flying by the musical note the vibration makes in the air ; but there comes a time when the most delicate ear fails to perceive sound, while the small creature certainly goes on in its path. That note God hears, but we do not. Most likely God hears and loves what does not ever reach us ; our silences may be full of singing to him.

4. Now we reach the grand *chorus* with which the singing concluded. Led by representatives, whose mysterious nature and office we cannot altogether explain, it would seem as if the whole three choirs burst forth into one final ascription : "And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshiped him that liveth for ever and ever."

So intricate and perplexing is this whole question concerning those beings here seen in the presence of God, that it would only divert our study from its profitable purpose if we went in upon it. A passage, quoted from a previous chapter, will give us all the information we really need :

"And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal : and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts, full of eyes before and behind. And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle. And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him ; and they were full of eyes within : and they rest not day

The "beasts."The Ghizeh pyramid.

and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come. And when those beasts give glory, and honor, and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever, the four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."

Here was the entire universe engaged in a song. For if the "beasts," or "living creatures," were like the cherubim, and so were the symbols of supremacy and excellence of the redeemed world; if they had the head of an ox, and of an eagle, and of a lion, and of a man, and so were the chiefs of the races on the ground or in the air—and if they thus stood for *all things alive*, after a removal of sin's curse—then the song was sung in tremendous unison by all who shone that moment in the shadowless presence of God.

Here was an anthem in one word. And "*Amen*" is the same in all human languages. Two travelers sat on the summit of the great pyramid at Ghizeh; they tried in vain to get into conversation until one exclaimed, "Hallelujah!" and the other answered, "Amen!"

Here was the universal endorsement of the themes of all the songs at once. For *amen* means, "so be it." It was the old word chosen when the vast tribes of Israel gave their assent to the law of Moses, and the covenant

A satisfied realm.The Amen of peace.

from Joshua: "All the people said, *Amen*." Hence, here in heaven, it was the acquiescence of all creation.

There must have been some sort of preference in Jesus' mind for this singular word. "Verily, verily," is in the Greek simply "Amen, amen." It is a particle of intense asseveration. Twice in one verse of prophecy is Jehovah addressed as "the God of Truth;" but what is there rendered "truth" is *Amen*; he is "the God of Amen." Here in the Revelation Christ is called "the Amen, the faithful and true Witness." He is the God of absolute truth, the King of the kingdom of truth; "For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us."

Here, then, was the last doxology of a satisfied realm, that the Lamb of God was going hereafter to rule. This was the calm rejoicing of a universe, which had reached good government at last! "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign forever and ever!"

Oh, there is rest for the tired heart in that sweet glad Amen! There is peace for all the singing soldiers of God in that Amen! There is solace for the disturbed foreboding mind in that Amen! Oh, there is infinite satisfaction for the universe in that Amen! It makes one feel like falling down, as the elders did, and worshipping him "that liveth forever and ever."

XXIV.

THE HEAVENLY CITY.

AND I JOHN SAW THE HOLY CITY, NEW JERUSALEM, COMING DOWN FROM GOD, OUT OF HEAVEN, PREPARED AS A BRIDE ADORNED FOR HER HUSBAND.—*Revelation 21 : 2.*

HAS any authentic and authoritative description of heaven ever been given us, so that we may rest in the notion we form, and may pass it on to our children as the true one? Are we quite certain that they understand how a tree can grow up in a golden pavement, and how a river can flow out from under a throne? Do gardens have city-walls and solid gates for defences, with jewels of marvelous size for their foundations on the outside?

Evidently such florid orientalisms of description are not intended to be exact and literal. But if not, what is there about heaven?

Some people cling to their old child-thought of a locality beyond the stars, a region above the bounds of human vision, where a city is built, or a paradise is laid out. They talk about the "Father's house with many mansions;" and they take great comfort in thinking how the redeemed are walking in its courts. They even imagine they hear Beulah bells ringing in their wakeful

The renewed earth.Heaven begins below.

midnights, as the sound of singing voices comes from over the river.

Others think that heaven is just this earth new, cleansed at last from its curse, and fitted again as it was in the days of Eden bloom to be the home of the sinless and happy sons of men. They quote the verse from the Apocalypse which relates how John saw the New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, and resting here on this purified planet, with its foundations garnished with precious stones, with its gates of pearl, and its streets of gold. It is clear that they are never at all troubled with the literal form of expression which asserts that this city comes "out of heaven," so as to feel pressed with the question, where is the "heaven" it comes from, and does it leave the heaven behind when it comes? Or does the heaven come along, the kingdom following the capital?

Others still say that Scripture does not mean to teach us to expect a localized heaven at all. They would pronounce it a mere fancy, grown out of a mistaken interpretation, to assert that somewhere above our heads, in the fire-lit line of our Saviour's departure from the mount of ascension, there is a fixed place to which the good are going and gone. They believe heaven is only a state ; a renovation of our nature, so that each has an individual heaven in his own breast, into which Jesus Christ comes and is formed an indweller ; and they will tell us that happiness consists not in any harps of gold, or sprigs of palm, or anthems of music, but in a meek

and holy disposition characteristic of the sanctified heart, when fully turned to the Saviour. If this be the true notion of a "better country," then our fulness of joy will consist in rest from toil, victory after warfare, glory succeeding suffering, bliss after pain, and peace after turmoil and care of daily exposure.

One thing is certain : however men may differ, they must come to a single conclusion finally ; that, although the Bible is crowded with hints as to the superior blessedness of the abode of God's people, yet it nowhere gives us an explicit account of its nature or locality. Here revelation is simply silent in its reserve.

Speculative discussions must prove profitless, for the Lord God has not designed to make clear anything beyond the fact that heaven will be all the redeemed will need or will wish. "I shall be *satisfied*, when I awake, with thy likeness." Still, let us see whether there may not be gained something from a little group of verses in the Apocalypse, which will reward our study. We are certainly all agreed upon a few points.

1. For example, this : Heaven must be a very splendid place, when one really does get there. All the descriptions unite in exhibiting the brilliancy of the city's adornment : "The building of the wall of it was of jasper ; and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass. And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper ; the second, sapphire ; the third, a chalcedony ; the fourth, an emerald ; the fifth, sardonyx ;

Celestial jewels.The London painting.

the sixth, sardius ; the seventh, chrysolite ; the eighth, beryl ; the ninth, a topaz ; the tenth, a chrysoprasus ; the eleventh, a jacinth ; the twelfth, an amethyst. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls ; every several gate was of one pearl : and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass."

Here are reflecting surfaces, and shining substances, and radiant materials of structure, multiplied in exhaustless profusion, each calculated to catch and repeat the extraordinary light which falls upon them. Like a room of mirrors, this entire abode of God will send back the images of his glory. What a flood of sunshine such a conception flings out upon the glooms of our earthly life ! Indeed, there is something very significant in the way in which the Scriptures offer these pictures of glittering splendor among the consolations of spiritual grace. It is like a beautiful setting to a wonderfully precious gem. The old prophets are foremost in this. "O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colors, and lay thy foundations with sapphires. And I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones."

In the London Exhibition there was once a beautiful painting, representing a mother on her knees in her desolate chamber, beside the body of her little child. Her face rose to just such a height that she looked across the edge of the coffin straight toward an open window, through which the western sun was streaming rays of

Mourning all ended.Wider worship in heaven.

lustrous twilight, kindling the whole sky with supernatural silver, purple, violet, and gold. Her eyes were arrested with the wonderful sunset ; and the legend underneath the picture was what perhaps she might have been repeating to herself : "The sun shall be no more thy light by day ; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee : but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory ; thy sun shall no more go down ; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself : for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended."

2. Again, we are agreed on this : religious life here fits us for a wider and grander experience of worship in heaven. On this earth it seems absolutely necessary for our poor weak faith, and especially our dull imagination, to have something tangible to aid in ordinary service of God. But in that celestial city it will be only a gladness to see Christ face to face, and we can afford to disdain all sensuous emblems and helps : "And I saw no temple therein : for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it."

It may not be worth while to call our churches "temples," but we certainly do need edifices, and we think they ought to be expensively beautiful. It is perhaps true that our æsthetic sense may be made tributary to devotion ; at any rate, one would think a few of our buildings might be put to better use by proper architecture, so that they would lift us nearer and nearer to heaven.

A Canadian church.Luminous color.

Most of us have heard of that fine structure in a Canadian city, every point of which presses upwards, and teaches a lesson as it rises. The foundation must, of course, be put on the earthly rock, but step by step every line of the plan struggles away from it. The tower grows slender as it goes into the serener air ; the steeple surmounts that, till it is ready to be lost in a spire ; so likewise the spire soars on aloft in sweet sunshine until it is crowned by the figure of a tall angel in white ; and the angel also keeps looking upward, and even his hand is extended, and the slender index-finger points heavenward—heavenward—still !

3. Further, we are all agreed in this : the supreme excellence of heaven is found in the presence of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, whose revelation illumines it. “And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it : for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.”

The one sight to be seen will be Immanuel with the many brilliant crowns on his head, and the rainbow over his throne. It cannot be possible for earthly writers to gather more figures or similitudes of speech for use in description, than has been done oftener than once in the Old and New Testament, just to show radiancy and flashing of luminous color. We are absolutely bewildered to know what jewels are meant by some of those which are mentioned in the account of the foundation stones of the Celestial City. No sun is needed, no moon is needed ; indeed, pains are taken to state that not even

Number of inhabitants.

" No mean city."

a "candle" could be put into use. For the light all comes from one who calls himself "the bright and morning star."

4. Next to this, we are all agreed that the number of heaven's inhabitants must be very large. Most pitiful and inadequate is the notion of Christ's atonement which would make the achieved results of it diminutive. What do Christian people mean when they preach about "the small moiety of the elect?" A "nation" may be born in a day, when God's grace is in exercise. And all realms are to be put under tribute for souls. The north will give up, the south will not keep back: "And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into it."

All ranks and conditions will be there: David the king, Joseph the ruler, Philemon the master, Onesimus the slave. When the apostle is telling the story of Abraham's faith, he takes occasion to intimate what a blessed issue it had in the generations following: "Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the seashore innumerable." We need not belittle our inheritance, nor underrate the companionship we shall share when we enter into it.

Paul once said, perhaps a little proudly, when they challenged him concerning Tarsus, "I am a citizen of no mean city." And what should a Christian say when talking of heaven? Is it necessary for due modesty

Access always free.Henry Martyn.

that he should grow deprecating, and speak as Lot did of Zoar, "Is it not a little one?"

5. Again: we admit and proclaim widely that access to heaven is positively free at all times to all persons who will come into it in the right way. "And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there."

One word here used settles the condition of admission; it is the "saved" who are welcomed. Salvation is the theme of heavenly songs. Penitence for sin, faith in the Saviour, surrender of one's life—these are the steps of the redeemed ones coming home. They involve some measure of sacrifice. One must cut loose from a fair world around him, and turn his hope unto Christ. "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God."

That is not always easy, for earth is near and heaven seems far off. "It is an awful, an arduous thing," wrote Henry Martyn from his field of mission toil to dear friends in England, "to root out every affection for earthly things, so as to live only for another world." Such conflict is not unusual. But diligent discipline can do much to relieve it.

6. We are also agreed that all worthy gains of this life are perpetuated and welcomed in the other. When Constantine established Constantinople as the capital city of his vast empire, he beautified it—indeed, history says he almost builded it new—out of all the other chief towns in the world he ruled. He took pictures and stat-

Constantinople.

Earth's "bubbles."

ues, columns and carvings of edifices, and pillars and mosaics, away from every foreign owner, and put them in his metropolis. He forced all the kings of the earth he had conquered to contribute the very best they had. That may have seemed hard for the vanquished in those times. But here we see that the Christian is only invited to add his gathered treasures to his own home. It is the privilege of believers to make heaven happier: "And they shall bring the glory and honor of the nations into it."

What are the true honors of kings? Surely, not these factitious fames and titles, these monuments and columns and arches, of which they seem so proud. Cræsus left his wealth all behind him; Nero could not save his palace by burning it up; Cheops gave a pyramid for the world's riddle; Pompey's pillar is out on the lonely hill in Alexandria still; and Cleopatra's needle has been once already lost at sea. "The earth hath bubbles as the water hath, and these be of them." What are royal believers permitted to bear away with them, and contribute to the joys of heaven?

Our *acquisitions of worthy knowledge* may go along with us into the other life. Our powers of investigation will not be impaired; and we shall have a better chance for study then than now.

Our *memories* also will continue active. "Son, remember." Zaccheus will not forget the sycamore-tree he climbed in order to see Jesus; and Bartimeus will often think of the gate of Jericho.

"Clothed upon."The Waterloo question.

Our *affections* will be worth saving, and they will add very much to the heavenly enjoyment for most of us. We shall know the friends that went away from us, and they will be glad when we meet them. Heaven is to be a place for "knitting severed friendships up." The parted and the pure shall be joined together again.

This must be what the apostle means when he says, "not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon." We shall lose nothing worth keeping; we shall gain much better worth having. The inhabitants of that other life have been called our "high-born kinsmen." There is a blood-relationship between us. It kindles an enthusiasm in the tamest soul to remember that they most likely know what we are doing here, and quite appreciate all that is honorable and valiant and true in our behavior. So it is well to refer to this often. "Our very thoughts are heard in heaven." What will be the judgment of us in those pure minds? On the eve of the battle of Waterloo, it is related that Wellington sent all around through his army the question, "What will they think of us to-morrow in England?"

7. Then, finally, we are agreed that everything will be excluded from heaven which will bring discomfort or retain taint of sin: "And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie; but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life." This is the official proclamation.

There is something quite novel, as well as exceedingly

Negative descriptions.

No more "vigils."

interesting, in these negative forms of presentation we discover in the Scriptures. If there is a confessed mystery in the statements as to what we shall find in the Celestial City, surely we ought to be grateful for being told so plainly what will never, never, be found there any more. Take away from our earthly lot just one item, that of *illness*—undoubtedly the fruit of sin—and how commonplace, but how welcome, is the verse of old prophecy: "And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity."

"O mother!" said a crippled boy, when they talked to him, by his bedside of suffering, concerning the heaven to which they hoped he would go—"O mother! shall I be straight then?" And she simply quieted him down with the text: "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing."

Remove this curse of deformity, and weak will, and diseased body, and depraved taste, and constitutional infirmity, and oh, how much goes with it! Leave sin behind, too, and we begin to breathe freely. No more watching; no more dreading; no more shames in the daytimes; no more vigils in the night; but all free and safe ever! "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."

A western city.The "afternoon" land.

In a word, so far as we can now see, the new life is just ordinary human life with a new heart ; and heaven is just this worthy existence of ours with all its blessed gains and enjoyments, forever rid of its sufferings and troubles. Heaven is only the projection of the *best* which the human heart can conceive into an unhindered experience where it can go on limitlessly in the light.

Once, in a western town, they told us that the beauty of it lay in its suburbs and environs. And one of the enthusiastic residents remarked, as we admired the main street in particular, and especially commented on the fine show it made at the upper end upon the hill, "Oh, yes ! it is much more beautiful across the river !" Then he showed us how beneath steep banks a deep and rapid stream was running athwart the path just ahead. But he went on : "These same streets are continued over on the other side ; but they have more room there ; so the yards are finer, and the fountains are loftier, and the edifices are more substantial ; indeed, it is wonderfully beautiful on the hillside yonder, especially in the *after part of the day*, when the long sunshine is falling !"

Well, then, is it true that all the streets of this life are continued in the other across the dark river ? Do the gardens grow fairer, and the fountains finer, as the immortal road runs on ? Is it going ever to be said of us Christian travelers, as the Laureate sings of those whom only his imagination saw on the journey :

"In the afternoon they came unto a land
In which it seemèd always afternoon."

XXV.

THE FINAL PRAYER.

HE WHICH TESTIFIETH THESE THINGS SAITH, SURELY I COME QUICKLY; AMEN. EVEN SO, COME, LORD JESUS.—*Revelation 22: 20.*

ANY one who stands on the heights overlooking the sea close by Sandy Hook will be struck by the apparent hurry and huddling together of the vessels as they push in toward the narrows. Wherries and skiffs, steamers and yachts, all the craft, large and little, are pressing eagerly forward as if to make the harbor earliest.

The same picture comes to one who watches the closing in of Scripture scenes and themes, as the revelation of God reaches its conclusion. There is certainly a rapid rushing of events, a swift driving together of directions, a strange repetitious energy of expression in the promises, all calculated to fix in one's mind the thought that these celestial voices are soon to be silent, and the great book from heaven is to receive its impressive "finis."

"Even so, come, Lord Jesus," is the small invocation just before the benediction which dismisses the universe from worshipfully looking upward after new disclosure. Its characteristic force as a prayer does not all appear at once. Certain peculiarities will reward a patient study of its meaning and pertinency.

I. For example, it is a prayer *offered under inspiration*. It was conceived and lifted by the beloved disciple, who once lay in the Saviour's bosom ; he would know how to pray, if any one did.

1. How brief it is in its measure ! Seven words : one for each color in the rainbow, one for each note in a song, one for each of the days in a perfect week : not at all too much, not at all too little. All the pattern prayers of the Bible are very short. "Lord, save us : we perish !" "Remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom !" "O that Ishmael might live before thee !" "God be merciful to me a sinner !" "I Come quickly ; Amen. Even so, come !"

2. How comprehensive it is in its doctrine ! It says, "Lord, come," for John knew who was his Master, and was certain he was a divine being. It says, "Lord Jesus," for John knew who was his Redeemer, and understood that he was thoroughly a man. It says in the outset, "even so," for John had been tossed so much on the turbulent and boisterous seas of experience, that he had learned the grace of acquiescence perfectly. It says, "come quickly," for John remembered many a sweet communion, and longed once more to have his beloved teacher return to his side again.

3. How importunate it is in its spirit ! The entire chapter rings with that one word "come." The Spirit says it ; the Bride says it ; and whosoever hears the others say it, is to say it himself. One's imagination is arrested ; it is like listening to those slow, sweet, smooth

Falling chimes.The isle Patmos.

chimes that fall from a neighboring belfry, stroke by stroke, as the evening worshipers move tranquilly toward the door. Slower and slower, but clearer and clearer, the vibrations seem to speak to us, as they are growing fewer and more lingering, with an increase of pleading, as if impatient to be heard and heeded.

4. How direct it is in its address! Evidently John was weary and growing lonesome. It is said that this wretched island of Patmos used to be pleasanter than it is now. The pilgrims and anchorites of the middle ages may have made it so for a while. Once in history it was called "Palmosa," or the Palmy Isle; there is on it now just one palm, travelers say, and that is in a valley which, in memory of the apostle, has been named the "saint's garden." In John's time, however, it deserved the description that Suetonius gives to it, "a bleak and desolate spot, fit for banished exiles." And this prayer of the sad and lonely man shows that he felt certain that only the company of the Lord Jesus could enliven a neighborhood so forlorn and dull. So he said "Come."

There cannot be any objection to our making this inspired petition our pattern, its brevity and its comprehensiveness, its importunity and its directness, all being so commendable. There are moods and tenses of human experience for which it is fitted well. It must have sounded sweetly at Patmos when the wind was high, and the clouds hung low, and the waves were moaning.

II. Observe, in the second place, this is *the last prayer*

Last things.The temple of God's word.

in the Bible. John was the last of the apostolic band, and this was certainly the last prayer he ever put on the unchanging record.

Last things always have great significance ; the last leaf of autumn, or the last bird before the winter snows come ; the last Indian of a fading race ; the last words of a friend, the last caress before estrangement ; the last visit of New Year's ; the last bill a spendthrift flings away from his scattered fortune. Our imaginations sometimes fasten on what is likely to be on ahead ; the last Lord's Day for any one of us ; the last sermon we shall hear then, or the last hymn we shall help to sing. It would be difficult for one to explain just why these things affect him so mournfully.

In this instance the impression is not at all sad, but the rather exhilarating ; for we have a kind of satisfied interest in a completion which fitly closes any great enterprise. We like what is well done clear to the end. The ancient fathers wept for very joy as they saw the top-stone of the temple finished at last, and brought forth into its place with shoutings of "Grace, grace," unto it. And he must be a dull Christian, who, having watched this grand beautiful edifice of inspiration rising slowly but surely in its courses of Pentateuch, prophecy, psalm, proverb, gospel, epistle, is not now fairly kindled into enthusiasm in his emotions as he discovers how fitly such a wonderful masterpiece of the Apocalypse crowns it at the summit. "The law of the Lord is perfect."

The Bible ends with prayer.John's old age.

And how fine it is that the word of divine grace closes with a prayer—and such a prayer! Around through all its circles of intelligent thought runs this spirit of inspiration: predictions, and songs, and apothegms, and rituals; but at last, rising with a supreme devotion, as “fire ascending seeks the sun,” it calmly turns its direction toward the Godhead whence it had its source. “In the beginning, God:” so the Scripture starts out in its revelation from heaven, and it continues with the inspiration of God’s Spirit through both Testaments: so here it ends with a call for another dispensation of God’s Son: “Even so, come, Lord Jesus!”

III. Observe, once more, this is a prayer *raised by an aged Christian*; indeed, it is the final act of his honored public life.

It is well known to us all that the beloved disciple lingered in this world long after all his comrades were dead. When this Apocalypse was written, sixty years had elapsed since Christ had ascended from the Mount of Olives. Through all John’s rough vicissitudes he had been marvelously spared for fresh service. He came to so great an age at last, that the foolish story was revived concerning him which he had hoped forever to silence when he added an extraordinary chapter to his gospel. There had been reported for some time among the churches the absurd tradition that our Lord actually promised him immortality. This he had taken pains to contradict at the time. “Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should

False report about John.Christ's ascension.

not die ; yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die ; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee ? This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things : and we know that his testimony is true."

Of such a mysterious remark, made by our Saviour, John would of course retain a most vivid remembrance. It did not say that Jesus would return before he should die ; but it did not deny him the privilege of hoping such might be the case. This unusual length of days may have encouraged him much. It is difficult to decide what were the real views of the apostles as to our Lord's advent. John certainly believed that Jesus was coming back some time, or he never would have prayed, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

He was not praying for mere death. Job once said : "Oh that God would grant me the thing that I long for, even that he would let loose his hand and cut me off !" That is a very different petition from this. The patriarch longed to find death ; the apostle may have longed to avoid death, by hastening the revelation of his beloved Lord and Master so that he might see him again in the flesh.

He had reason enough to believe this to be a lawful prayer. When he with the others stood looking after Jesus as he rose into the parted skies, two men in white apparel suddenly exclaimed : "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven ? this same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so

Fontenelle's remark.

Prayer on a promise.

come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven."

Surely, every aged believer should be content to say, "Thy will be done;" but there could be no more appropriate prayer for one well on in years than this. No one wants the pains of death, for their own sake, if he could be delivered from them. Better by far would it be for him and for all of us if we could be among the company who shall escape dying altogether, and be found alive at Christ's coming, and be caught up into the air at his right hand! If he is ready, why should not he *want* to be forever with the Lord? "I am about to decamp," said the aged Fontenelle; "and I have sent all my heavy baggage on before me already!"

IV. Observe, in the fourth place, this is *a prayer on a promise*: nay, more; it is a promise changed into a prayer.

Suppose a skilful archer should catch a flying arrow in the air before it fell, and fixing it in his bow instantly should send it back whence it came; this would be very much what Matthew Henry says in his quaint, forcible way: "Whatever God gives you in any promise, be sure to send back to him in a prayer."

Note the language of this passage of Scripture just as it is in our version: "He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly; Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus." One little felicity among the rest is lost in the rendering. The particle of asseveration in each instance used is the same. The word rendered "surely"

"Surely" and "even so."Prayer from experience.

is the exact word rendered "even so." That mere vocabulary of this beautiful language is like a ring of gold in which the promise and the prayer are linked together. Jesus says, "I come surely ;" so John says, "Oh, surely then, come, Lord Jesus, come quickly !"

V. Observe, still further, that this was a *prayer founded in a long reach of extended experience*. There is no other way of accounting for its daring intelligence and impassioned pleading.

John had once been at Jesus' side in the flesh. And now for some weeks he had been looking into heaven through an open door of pearl. From his Gospel and Epistles we easily infer that his was a nature of peculiarly penetrating and delicate mold. He had had exceedingly rare opportunities of increase in learning and growth in grace. So we are rightly led to conjecture that he was probably one of the loftiest and most spiritual Christians that ever lived. Of all who are mentioned in the New Testament church, he seems the most profoundly versed, the most deeply read, in the wonderful revelations of divine things. He had his choice among them always.

Now here we find this favored man suddenly prompted to raise his last mortal prayer. The crowning moment of his life is reached. Gazing straight into the open door of God's own heaven, he is invited and inspired to make his final request. What will he ask ? Shall he seek more information concerning the divine purpose ? Can he know now, if he will, the story of the angels,

John's highest wish.

Rutherford's last words.

their revolt, and their fall? Is it within his reach at this supreme moment to learn where Moses was buried, and whither Elijah went in the whirlwind? Can he hear some more singing? Can he see some more shining of seraphim's wings? Can he talk some more with the elders, wearing golden crowns? Is it true that all heaven is wide open to this beloved disciple, and he may satisfy his wistfulness or his curiosity? What will he want more? With all his vast experience, what is he going to seek in the last prayer he lifts before he enters heaven?

Nothing: *only a clearer sight of his Lord Jesus Christ!* Only a nearer companionship with his Redeemer. Not one of the glittering glories of that Celestial City besides; not one of the tender memories of earth besides; only this: "Come, Lord Jesus!"

How high a soaring faith may go, even here on the low earthly footstool of God's majesty! How freely a bright experience of the new life may gaze into the ineffable mysteries of eternity! And yet this is all it comes to, "Give me now a full, fresh revelation of Jesus Christ! My eyes would see the King in his beauty, and behold the land that is far off! Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee. Show me, O Lord, thy glory!"

"The bride eyes not her garments, but her dear bridegroom's face;
I will not gaze on glory, but on my Lord of grace;
Not on the crown he giveth, but on the piercèd hand—
The Lamb is all the glory of Immanuel's land!"

The test prayer for all.

"Come, Lord Jesus!"

Two simple reflections seem to have place here, now that our study has covered the meaning of this wonderful petition.

1. A prayer like this is singularly appropriate as a test in every Christian's time of self-examination. "Yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry." Are we individually ready to meet him? Are we actually praying for his appearance? Does it frighten us to think he may be here very soon?

2. A prayer like this is exactly the prayer for every unconverted person to offer. It is a prayer founded on a promise. Let us look carefully at the surprising dialogue which is recorded in this same chapter. Jesus speaks first: "And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be."

Then we hear the responses at once: "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth, say, Come. And let him that is athirst, come: and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

To whom does the Spirit say, Come? To whom does the Bride say in the same word, Come? To whom is he that heareth the Spirit and the Bride saying Come also to say, Come? These prayers are addressed not to sinners, but to Christ—Come, Lord Jesus! But now note that right in the middle of the sentence the sense changes: "Come, Lord Jesus! And whosoever will, let *him* come!" That is, let any one who will, come to the Lord Jesus. So when a man prays for the Saviour,

The last benediction.Four books with a curse.

the Saviour is on the way. Here is the prayer for all. Come to my heart, and dwell there. Come to my home, and rule there. Come to this poor world, and relieve it of sins. Come to thine own people who are waiting. Thou hast said thou wilt come : even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly.

And now the last prayer in the Bible is fitly followed by the last benediction. "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen." It is worth noticing that John pronounces here only the name of the Second Person in the adorable Trinity. In this he follows Paul, who gave a like announcement : "Unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation : " and then supplemented it with a like blessing : "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity."

There are four books in the Old Testament which end with a curse : Isaiah, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, and Malachi. The Hebrew scribes were always accustomed to repeat the verse just before the last in these cases so as to close their reading with something better than a malediction. But the New Testament needs no such relief. The last vision of Jesus that John saw showed him with his hands outstretched for a blessing at Bethany : and the last word he speaks for Jesus at Patmos is the benediction he left.

XXVI.

THE TEACHER TAUGHT.

THOU THEREFORE WHICH TEACHEST ANOTHER, TEACHEST THOU NOT THYSELF ?—*Romans 2 : 21.*

IN his conversation with Nicodemus our Saviour enunciated the principle to which all Christian usefulness must eventually be referred ; namely, that religious instruction, in order to be effective, must grow up out of one's personal experience. A careful exposition of the passage from which our text is taken will show that it offers likewise an illustration of the same rule.

The model Pharisee of primitive times imagined he was reaching the ultimate height of excellence when he could call himself a Jew ; he asserted for himself the most edifying orthodoxy ; he presented his life as the pattern of flawless morality and eminent devotion ; he claimed extraordinary keenness in discrimination, approving only what was excellent ; he contemplated himself as sublimely equal to any exigency of public station ; he could inform the ignorant, illumine the darkened, give counsel to bewildered adults, and help forward untaught children, being fully conversant with all the ritual and all the creed.

Yet with all these assumptions the apostle seems to have discovered that which led him to rate such a crea-

Religious instruction.

Living experience.

ture as a mere spiritual quack ; and he here denounces him with terrible violence. This man, so earnest against thieving, had a touch of dishonesty ; so stern in pressing the penalties of the seventh commandment, had some sins which would look ill under scrutiny. In a word, he was instructing others with no word for himself. And, again, with great detail of illustration so as not to be misunderstood, St. Paul reiterates the grand principle of the Gospel : *religious instruction is to be indorsed by the living experience of the instructor.*

This is the theme upon which I propose now to address my fellow-workers in the Sunday-school. A few general considerations will render the point sufficiently clear.

I. Consider, first, the *great common need* under which humanity lies. It has pleased God to make men instruments of good to each other. Hence the proclamation of the gospel is necessarily experimental. No converted man has really anything more to say than this : "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul."

There is singular advantage in this method, if only faithfully carried out. It invokes all the power of sympathy. It renders one man influential over many. It saves material. It stimulates exertion. Men are always moved to action in their own behalf when they find others, once confessedly in the same category, now relating and commending the means of their extrication. Naaman was just the person to tell lepers of the prophet

"Physician, heal thyself."Conscience mysterious.

in Samaria, who had bidden him go wash in the Jordan. Bartimeus was just the right one to lead blind men to Jesus, who had opened his eyes. Hence, it is perfectly natural that we demand of him who teaches us that he should first have felt the truth he proffers, that he should have experienced the good he promises, that he should have obeyed the command he is urging. We instinctively question the right of any individual to address us upon those grand matters of personal salvation, unless he can say as Christ did, "We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen." He is in as great peril as we are ; he is in as much need as we are ; and we say, "Physician, heal thyself!"

II. Consider, in the second place, the *aim of all religious instruction*. The conscience must be reached, and through its monitions the entire life must be influenced, or else all teaching is wasted. And with unregenerate people, conscience is seared more or less in every case where the soul has so far passed from mere infancy as to attain the exercise of free will. Great ingenuity is required in order to reach it ; something more than ingenuity is required in order to arouse it. Even then it is often misunderstood.

Nothing appears so mysterious as the forms of operation which this inner monitor chooses. Sometimes it seems to render a man harder and more violent ; and yet at that very wildest moment he is nearer yielding than ever before. Sometimes it melts a man into deep emotion ; and yet we painfully discover afterward that

Faces in water.

Scriptural variety.

this has been mere ebullition of excited feeling. The main question to be answered with all teachers is this : How may we learn to discriminate in these confusing manifestations ?

The answer is much easier than many are inclined to suppose. We cannot grow skilful in distinguishing these external shows, without diligent studies of our own internal experience. Conscience must be watched in its working within our hearts. "As in water, face answereth to face ; so the heart of man to man." But face does not answer to face exactly ; features of children differ, and expressions of countenance are flitting and fitful. Still, the number and the name of the lineaments are on every face the same. On general principles, that truth is most effective, which, having proved itself forceful in reaching our own consciences, goes from its success there directly and unhindered upon the intrenchments of another. And let it wear all its awful power undisturbed ; when it has the divine doctrine of repentance to utter, it would be folly to change even its raiment of camel's hair, or cover the coarseness of the leathern girdle about its loins.

III. Consider, again, the *variety of forms* employed in Scripture instruction. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness ; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." But then, how much there is of it ! One becomes bewildered and embarrassed in the midst of

Sailors' medicine-chest.Testing one's drugs.

such riches. There is room for any amount of skill in discriminating what doctrine or what principle or what precept to apply in each given case to insure most good, and avert all evil.

Now, it is no reproach for me to utter, when I assert that many of our Sunday-school teachers are at a loss here. Are there none, even in this day of light, who turn over the pages of God's word helplessly in search of some reply to an inquiring soul? When the tossed world is drifting, and a passenger lies at the point of death, are there none who hurry boldly to the Bible, as a sailor to the medicine-chest; and yet stand appalled at the formidable array of spiritual drugs, any one of which possibly might be helpful or hurtful, if only they could know which? How can we learn what truth to employ or what phases of truth to present? There surely can be but one reply to this question.

Let the Scriptures be studied *experimentally*. Let the Christian teacher re-work every principle he offers to others, first into his own mind, and out-work it into his own life. It will not be long before he will have gone over most of the moods and tenses of religious feeling he will meet. It might not be safe that every physician try the effect of his prescriptions upon himself first; but for spiritual cures there is no process that can be more confidently commended. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh."

IV. Consider, furthermore, *the power of a godly example*. The common law of influence cannot be expected

"Living epistles,"Inconsistency betrays.

to fail, just because the force exerted has in some cases become salutary. The habit of the human heart is inveterate. Men are imitative, and in nothing so much as religious observance. Moreover, they insist upon identifying a moral teacher with what he teaches. Especially under the gospel will they have it that Christians shall incarnate the truth they urge on others, and shall become the personal embodiment of it with all its predicted results. They will not suffer a limping man to propose an effective cure for lameness.

Bear in mind that the world has this much of a show of unusual reason in the case of the followers of Christ; he expressly taught that they should be accepted as illustrations and exemplifications of the Gospel. The force of one sentence in the Sermon on the Mount turns upon the insignificant word, "*So*." "Let your light *so* shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." "If, therefore, the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" In like manner, the apostles taught, "Ye are living epistles, known and read of all men."

Hence there can be no inconsistency so utter as an inconsistent Christian teacher presents. There can no failure be more ridiculous in the eyes of a ribald world than that of a man who urges a truth and lives a lie. But, on the other hand, whenever fully possessed of the power of the gospel, pervaded with its spirit, and radiant with its light, a grand life goes about doing good, that life has a majestic driving force to it almost unlim-

A good man's shadow.A lens of ice.

ited. Men bend subdued to an influence which they cannot comprehend, but which they know is safe, and which they feel they can trust implicitly. Finer picture of human greatness there is not in the Bible than that of Simon Peter, when the multitudes brought out the sick on couches, that they might lay them where at least his shadow could fall on them. Oh! believe me, this poor world has been deceived cruelly a great many times, but it is yet intelligent enough to recognize its best benefactors. There is no one thing it loves more to abide under than a good man's shadow—the only shadow on this planet that renders it more luminous except the shadow of the Almighty wing.

V. Consider, in the fifth place, *the law of the Holy Spirit's action*. Truth is propagated not by transmission through mere symbols, but by radiation through conductors in contact.

The lens of a burning-glass will not only suffer the free passage of the sun's rays, but will condense and concentrate them, until the focus they fall upon bursts into flame; meanwhile the lens itself will remain perfectly cool. Wonderful experiments of this sort have been performed with even a lens of ice, which kindled a fire and continued unmelted. You can find nothing, however, in religious matters to which this phenomenon would answer. The torch, not the burning-glass, is the emblem of spiritual life; it flames while it illumines, and is warmed as it sets on fire. He influences others most who has been nearest in contact with Christ.

Thus the Holy Ghost becomes an indweller. This is the meaning of the word *spirituality*; it signifies the presence of the divine Spirit. And there surely remains no ignorance in any mind as to the absolute necessity of his presence in order to all Christian usefulness. Without him we can do nothing. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." No religious teacher can give more than he gets, nor communicate more than he possesses. I will not deny that the Holy Ghost sometimes works immediately upon the human heart; what I urge now is merely that when he acts upon another heart through ours, he does it by entering abidingly into ours. And ordinarily he influences the conscience next to the teacher's, by moving the conscience of the teacher. Thus the efficient impulse is seen to grow up out of experience.

Whichever way we look, then, we reach the same conclusion. The heart lies behind the hand which proffers religious truth. The practical importance of this principle cannot be over-estimated. Let us now search for points of contact which it finds in Sunday-schools.

1. We learn here the proper use to make of the Scriptures. All religious instruction must be received experimentally. Thus the Bible becomes personal in every one of its utterances. How is it now? "The vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot; for it is sealed: and the book is delivered to him that

Geographical fact.Legh Richmond's remark.

is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee : and he saith, I am not learned." What is this that renders the learned and the unlearned together so at fault ? Surely not want of education, but want of experience.

It may be worth knowing, as a geographical fact, that there is no water in the Kidron valley save after a shower ; it may be important to learn, as a historic fact, that Capernaum was located at Khan Minyeh ; but this is not what is going to save souls. We need to read the divine word with a deeper sense of its spiritual meaning. We must transmute facts into principles ; we must incarnate doctrine in daily action ; we must embody truth in life ; we must reduce vague information to vital and available help.

2. We learn to distinguish between gift and grace. Mere intellectual gift sometimes even hinders grace. "Christ," said Legh Richmond, "may be crucified between classics and mathematics." It is not our want of aptitudes for doing good which stands in our way, half so much as it is our want of communion with God. The rule is, "Oh ! taste and see that the Lord is good !" Out of this experimental acquaintance with truth grows our power fitly to offer it. Only thus can we learn to recommend the various viands on the table of the gospel feast. Scholarship becomes a means to an end. It is not the show of splendid attainments, but the hidden force of piety underlying them, which affects the souls we hope to influence.

The gospel light is much like the solar light ; its

Chemical ray of the spectrum.Teachers in black.

beauty is not its efficiency. You may divide the sun-beam into seven beautiful colors, and not one alone nor all together will imprint an image on a daguerreotype plate. Just outside the spectrum, in the dark, there is one entirely invisible ray, called the chemical ray, which does all the work. No man ever saw it, no man ever felt it; and yet this it is which bleaches and blackens a dull surface into figures of loveliness and life. I care not how luminous a man's personal or intellectual qualities may be; if he lacks, amid the showy beams that are shining, this one which is viewless—this efficient but inconspicuous beam of spiritual experience—all his endeavors will surely prove inoperative for good.

3. We learn here the advantage of seasons of discipline. In all the round of God's dealing with his children, there is nothing like suffering as an educator. It deepens and widens and swells the volume of Christian experience, so that the simplest utterance is made effective. Ah! how fine is the promise for good that is coming, when one wearing habiliments of mourning enters a Sunday-school with the wish for a class to teach! "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall, doubtless, come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."

Anything that loosens the hold of the soul on earthly things, and just shuts it up to God, is valuable; but, as a preparation for usefulness, is priceless. Any man expert in sea-life could have said all that the apostle said when he came forth to quiet the sailors in the midst of

Paul in the ship.Plague in Ireland.

a shipwreck. The force of his counsel lay not so much in the prudence of what he suggested, as in the experience which was embodied in it—that “long abstinence” in which he had received his vision. One mysterious but remembered hour there was which gave his speech all its efficiency. “And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man’s life among you, but of the ship. For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Cæsar: and, lo, God had given thee all them that sail with thee. Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer; for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me.” It is just this, *just this*, which is the element of power in any counsel. The angel of experience is sent to one, and then he is ready to say, “I believe God!”

4. We learn the secret of all success, and the explanation of all failure. It would seem at first sight that truth is efficient in itself; that the gospel sword has an inherent thrust, no matter who wields it; and that all which needs to be done is merely to bring it in contact with human necessity. But now we understand that first it must pass through the teacher’s experience before it can be expected vitally to influence those who are taught. He who fails, lacks in experience; he who grows in it, succeeds; that is, he who teaches another teaches also himself.

When the plague was raging in Ireland, the priests gave out that if any man would take from his own fire

Calvin's seal-motto.Palestine relics.

a piece of burning peat and light his neighbor's fire with it, he would deliver the family from an attack of the disease. The whole region was instantly alive with brands passing to and fro. Oh! if superstition could do this much, ought not zeal to do more? But the kindling was to come from one's own hearthstone then; and the kindling must come from one's own heart now. Calvin's seal-motto was a hand holding a heart on fire, with the legend, "I give thee all, I keep back nothing!" What we need beyond every other earthly need is, to have our entire level of Christian experience lifted. We are too busy about appliances and instruments and places and theories.

My fellow-workers, suffer me one word. Twice in my middle life I have been at the ends of the earth. This hand that writes to you has plucked olive leaves from the old tree in Gethsemane. I have a piece of a pyramid that I brought away from Egypt. On my table lies a canteen of water which I dipped from the Jordan. Alas! how little use I can make of these now! I showed them to our Sunday-school many weeks ago, and that is about all I can do with them. And here I am back on the old ground again, facing my task. All I have really to work with, I find, is my experience of the Saviour's love. And that is the result, not of my journeys, but of my prayers.

5. We learn the last essential of preparation for teaching. We must have the presence of the Holy Ghost. You see this most evidently in the case of the apostle

Chrysostom's picture of Paul.

Paul at Lystra.

who penned our text. "Thus," says Chrysostom, "this man, three cubits high, became tall enough to touch the third heavens." They called him Paullus, because he was little. He had a distemper in his sight. His bodily presence was said to be weak, and his speech contemptible.

But no man ever equaled him in power as a religious teacher. He held up before the world the most unwelcome and despised truth of the new gospel. He turned it round and round in his hand, as his own soul rose to a full comprehension of its magnitude. He bound to it all his learning; he wreathed around it poetry and philosophy; he warmed it with all his fiery ardor of temperament; until, in the supernatural rush of his eloquence, his diminutive body was forgotten, his bent form was straightened, his weak eyes were glowing, his hesitant utterance became fluent; and Saul of Tarsus, with all his passions and all his disabilities and all his sin was lost in the inspiration of Paul, the ambassador of the living God! No wonder that the simple-minded multitude of Lystra thought he was a deity, and brought for him garlands and oxen to sacrifice, saying, in the speech of Lycaonia, "The gods be come down to us in the likeness of men!"

Oh! for a baptism of the Spirit on us and on our children, that should fill us with a like experience and insure for us a like success!

XXVII.

FOUR PILLARS OF THE CHURCH.

AND WHEN JAMES, CEPHAS, AND JOHN, WHO SEEMED TO BE PILLARS, PERCEIVED THE GRACE THAT WAS GIVEN UNTO ME, THEY GAVE TO ME AND BARNABAS THE RIGHT HANDS OF FELLOWSHIP; THAT WE SHOULD GO UNTO THE HEATHEN, AND THEY UNTO THE CIRCUMCISION.—*Galatians 2 : 9.*

OUR studies have led us along over the lives and literary work of four apostles, to whose joint labors we owe the larger part of the New Testament. One of them, Paul, when writing to the Galatians, says that James, Peter, and John “seemed to be pillars” in the church at Jerusalem. Either of them might afterward have made the made remark of him. What he meant was most felicitously conveyed under such a figure. And we should not be far out of the way if we grouped together all these men whose writings we have been studying, and called them “pillars” for the sake of the support they offered, and the adornment they gave, in the grand edifice of the Christian temple.

I. Paul comes first in the order. He wrote thirteen of the epistles, perhaps fourteen : Hebrews is in discussion still.

We can tell an artist by his style ; we could recognize the nature and characteristics of this great man by these letters very readily if we had nothing else. But the his-

The apostle Paul.

The apostle

tory in the Acts is full of graphic incidents in his personal career likewise ; and we have learned to know the small-bodied, large-minded apostle quite thoroughly. No writer has ever lived who more distinctly impressed himself on his books. "Style is the man." We are actually familiar with a personality so bold and distinguishable from the very beginning.

He had been in early life a bigoted Pharisee. Passionate and revengeful, threatenings and slaughters were so natural to him, while he was persecuting the church of Christ, that the inspired historian uses a violent figure of speech to say he was "breathing them out." But when he became a preacher of the new faith, his whole demeanor changed. Paul was, without doubt, the most thoroughly converted man whose biography is recorded in the Bible.

II. Next in order we entered upon the study of one lesson from the epistle of James.

This single letter is all we have from him, and yet a most striking composition it is. Taken alone, just as it stands, it seems a little cold and unspiritual ; insists pertinaciously and punctiliously upon the minor moralities. But few would agree with the impetuous Martin Luther in pronouncing it "an epistle of straw." That is going too far.

Indeed, the more one studies the epistle in the full light of the gospel, the more clearly he perceives that a strong, rugged teacher was earnestly concerned to maintain consistency in behavior up to the entire limit.

Genuine piety.

Simon Peter.

formation, before he should waste himself in enthusiastic gushing after that which was quite beyond his attainments. This apostle rightly bore the name of "James the Just." He is supposed to have been a close relative of our Lord himself; some say he was his brother. A calm, practical common-sense runs through all he says. He was intolerant of mere pretension. He was utterly set against sham. You may not like his somewhat stern dealing; but you are certain there is no veneering upon his speech. He is undoubtedly genuine, to say the least of him. One can rest upon his candor, even if he is not won by his gentleness of zeal. And while people are fretted by such plainness, it remains indisputably true that if everybody would do as James says he ought to do, everybody would be a better and a happier man.

III. Simon Peter then met us on the threshold of his two letters like a welcome old friend.

There seems an indescribable pathos in all the sentiments of this singular apostle. We see his modesty in giving counsel; he is "also an elder;" nothing more. But no man ever worked out his conclusions through a deep experience more absolutely than he did. He knew of what he wrote.

He feels that his antecedents are somewhat against him. His whole life has been full of conflict. It has cost him much to achieve even a little headway in grace. Impulsive and inconsistent, vacillating and irresolute, but affectionate and tender-hearted in every action, he, like Paul, had to labor to keep his body under, lest he

Luther's opinion of Peter.The apostle John.

should become a castaway. Once he went so far ahead of Jesus in an unauthorized defence of him that our Lord had to work a miracle to retrieve the mistake. And right after that, he followed Jesus so far off that a maid-servant taunted him into swearing to a lie of denial. All the time, this man draws us to him ; he is so loving and so artless. He is the most *human* man in the Bible. "Whenever I look at Simon Peter," says the enthusiastic Luther, "my very heart leaps for joy. If I could paint a portrait of this apostle, I would paint on every hair of his head—'I believe in the forgiveness of sin !'"

IV. After this, John furnished us with matter for nine of the twenty-five lessons.

No inspired writer could more fitly have crowned our feast of fat things. This old and lonely, but cheerful and gentle man, gave us the benefit of visions passing mortal conception. If we had been asked to name the apostle most likely to receive such extraordinary favor, and most fitted to use it for edification in the churches, I think we should all have pointed out the exact one whom the Lord chose. It is not wise to speak of John, as many do, as an affectionate and effeminate, a long-haired, white-faced weakling, all gush, and all mysticism and softness. He was called a "Son of Thunder" because he was so full of force ; a being of unmistakable fervor of energy and fire of disposition. He was a man, however, of deep spiritual penetration, and most likely went farther into the experimental meaning of

Diversity of gifts."Stir up" gifts.

what his divine Master revealed than any other one of the twelve followers he selected.

Thus, then, these four pillars of the church stand before us for our contemplation. Some thoughts for a review may possibly be suggested by the picture.

1. For example, we see that the widest diversity of gifts can be employed to advantage in winning souls to Christ.

It would hardly be possible to sketch four characters differing more in essential particulars than these apostles. Paul was the theologian of the early church. Peter had an undeniable headship in organization. But James brought his cool temperament into service in decisions involving difficult points of casuistry, while John was of all the best calculated to labor for spiritual eminence in the converts. Now when results are before us, no one could venture to pronounce which was the most useful in the grand work Christ gave them all to do. Each was the best for his own work. The rule for ourselves would be found in Paul's advice to Timothy. He gives this in two forms: "Neglect not the gift that is in thee;" and then again: "Stir up the gift of God which is in thee." We must take it for granted that the Lord never chose any one for work without bestowing on him some sort of a *gift* for practical use. This he is to "stir up," and this he must not "neglect."

2. So this would suggest a second lesson: failure in one particular field or sphere of action does not preclude great after success in another for the same man.

Early failure.Subsequent success.

It will be remembered that Paul found poor welcome in the beginning of his ministry. His antecedents, like Peter's, were against him. He had been lately too violent in his persecution of the saints. The members of the new churches stood aloof: "And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. And he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem."

Still, it was evident that he would be always under suspicion in the capital where Stephen had been stoned, and wherever he should attempt to work among the Jews. It was expedient for him to go away at once among strangers. His faithful friend clung to him in his present fortunes, and bore him company. Just here the verse we are studying now comes in: "And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision." Thus it was that Paul became a preacher to the heathen far from all his early and patriotic associations. As a home missionary he was a failure. The Lord had other work for him to do.

It is not every Christian's duty to enter the ministry,

Following Providence.Individualities preserved.

or superintend a mission-school. He may have a higher aptitude for something else. It is better to let Providence decide without any setting of our hearts upon a favorite work. "Some people," so I once heard a preacher say, "follow Providence as a man follows a wheelbarrow, pushing it on before him." Most of us have known a few Christians who fixed their wills on succeeding in enterprises which we honestly believed were never designed for them. By and by, the Lord puts all this right, and they find their real calling. So it is well for us all never to be discouraged; God's goodness will locate our lives in his own chosen time.

3. Then once more: we might learn that the individualities of personal character are in no wise destroyed by the new life under the gospel.

Paul, after his conversion, was just as earnest and driving as before. James carried his carefulness as a Pharisee into his demeanor as a Christian. Peter left his boats and tackle to become a skilful fisher of men, with the same adroitness and patient business absorption put into his fresh profession. So John was affectionate to Jesus' mother, because he had grown up affectionate to his own.

Naturalness is one of the best evidences of grace, for it excludes assumption and hypocrisy. No one will ever succeed in making himself better by making himself over into another man's likeness. The usual failure in endeavors at imitation is owing to the fact that human

Imitation is hurtful.Paul's eloquence.

perversity almost always selects striking peculiarities in a pattern, and then is unconscious of having left out the great excellences which gave them their power. So the result is only an oddity.

4. In the fourth place, we see that true religion in the heart is a powerful helper in intellectual advancement.

The history of all these four men affords an illustration of the Scripture text : "The entrance of thy words giveth light ; it giveth understanding unto the simple." We all know how Simon Peter was reared. How is it possible that he could reach literary attainments sufficient to enable him to write two such epistles as those which bear his name ? Scholars tell us they are composed in the finest Greek in the New Testament. The explanation is easy. He had been for many years at school to Christ.

Take Paul also : he was taught well at the feet of Gamaliel, no doubt ; but his excellences are *marvelous* both as a polemic and as a rhetorician. Whenever he spoke or wrote, he made his message sound in the ears of men with the loftiness of Isaiah, the devotion of David, the vehemence of Ezekiel, and over and above these with a stroke and a ring that was his own, which, while it comprehended them all, transcended them all, and gave to his address a living energy that had no equal. "If any man will do my will," said Jesus Christ, "he shall know of the doctrine." Obedience is an instrument in grace.

5. Again, we can learn from these men's biographies

Personal weaknesses.The ideal Christian.

and writings that the very best Christian excellences may be, unfortunately, marred by personal weaknesses.

For every one of them was faulty enough to make some notable mistake, which has been handed down to us in the imperishable record. Paul quarreled sadly with Barnabas about Mark. James refused to welcome Paul at Jerusalem. John and James both suffered their injudicious mother to ask Jesus for pre-eminence for them ; and both of them wanted to have fire come down from heaven to consume a whole village at once, because the people behaved badly. To say nothing of Peter's denial, we must remember that on one occasion he dissimulated about eating with the Gentiles, so that Paul withstood him to the face as one to be blamed.

Most unpleasant it is to rehearse such facts. The least we can do is to beware of any servile following of mere men. Hero-worship is out of place among the human beings of the Bible. "Let no man glory in men." And as for ourselves, we may remember this: "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall."

6. Just a suggestion now, which may or may not be called a lesson. Perhaps the ideal Christian might be made up of the best excellences in all.

Put Paul's orthodoxy in doctrine alongside of James's morality in behavior ; put Peter's activity in impulse with John's extensive experience ; join all these into one man. He might not be the coming man of the world, but he would be a more efficient man than some

Good in every Christian.

"Jesus only."

who talk about such an one, and far beyond the ordinary standard as things go. We might all study divinity with Paul, casuistry with James, zeal with Peter, and spirituality with John ; it is likely we should gain much in every respect. So, practically, we might watch our neighbors, not to criticise them ungenerously, but to know their strong points with kind, charitable eyes, and this to some profit all the time. There is good in everybody who is a child of God.

7. Finally, we cannot fail to learn, as the sweetest and best lesson of all, that the truest Christians are those who are most like their Leader, and most loyal to him as supreme.

It is affecting to hear the denying, dissimulating Peter say, near the close of his troubled life, as his best counsel : " For even hereunto were ye called : because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps : who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth." And Paul puts the same thing into yet plainer words : " Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ." We may take men in the line of the Master, if our poor life needs intervening steps. But it would be well to forget them utterly, when we come near enough to catch glimpses of the Lord. Then, when we lift up our eyes, we shall see " Jesus only."



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